

**A STUDY OF QUALITY PARENTAL INVOLVEMENT IN THE EDUCATION
OF YOUNG CHILDREN**

A dissertation submitted by

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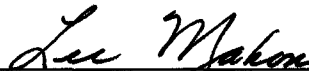
To

FIELDING GRADUATE UNIVERSITY

in partial fulfillment of the
requirements for the degree of

DOCTOR OF EDUCATION

This dissertation has been accepted for
the faculty of Fielding Graduate University by

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**by
April Danyea Hadley**

Abstract

The purpose of this research was to study parental involvement and how it impacted student achievement and the need for quality parental involvement programs. The study focused on the issues facing parents and their involvement in schools. An analysis was completed of present parental involvement programs to determine their quality. A review of the literature was completed which found that the history of parent involvement is extensive. A major conclusion was that cultural perspectives play a major role in parental involvement. Parents, schools, and students all played a major role in establishing and maintaining partnerships. The need for these quality programs is essential. This was evident throughout the study and interviews, particularly with the significance of the No Child Left Behind Act that requires schools to create and maintain programs of parental involvement.

INDEX WORDS: Parental involvement, Parent involvement, Parental support,
Parent

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DEDICATION

This work on my final degree is dedicated to my family. They are the ones who have shaped me as a person. They have supported my interests and have always held me in the highest regard. My family expects nothing but the best from me and this allows me to fulfill the ideal of the self-fulfilling prophecy. I am because they said and believed I could do anything I wanted.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

As I sit and reflect on those individuals who have inspired me in education, I would like to acknowledge those who impacted my life. I am an educator because they set the example.

The late Mrs. Frances Williams Green of my hometown of Thomasville, GA had an impact on me. Mrs. Greene was a mentor to a lot of students. She operated the Teacher Cadet program at my High School and oftentimes tried to recruit me as a cadet. I would refuse her many invitations because “teachers just didn’t make any money; I was poor and needed money.” To Mrs. Greene who was my Soror, my friend, and my Mentor, I attribute my thinking that I will never be poor. The students’ whose lives I touch make me rich-rich in knowing that I am giving only a small portion back of what was given to me.

I would like to express my sincere appreciation to my grade school teachers who encouraged me to read, read, and read some more. Their encouragements to be whom and what I wanted were critical in developing me as student and later as an educator.

I am eternally grateful to the group of professors who taught me in post secondary institutions. Dr. Audrey Beard and Dr. Debra Bembry instructed me while I attended Albany State. They gave me the necessary foundation to teach students in the early grades. While at The State University of West Georgia, Dr. Tom Peterson encouraged me to “dance with him” as we learned about the interconnectedness we share as human beings. Dr. Peterson related to me as an educator in a unique way. He focused on the journey of life as guiding our relationships. During my short attendance at Jacksonville State University for Leadership Certification I was afforded the opportunity to work with Dr. Lester Bivens. Dr. Bivens focused on producing quality leaders. He shared valuable knowledge on the area of Leadership and Supervision. All of these

professors contributed to my knowledge as an educator in a profound way and I will be forever grateful to not only the time they shared as teachers with me but also the time they shared as friends.

I am forever grateful to Fielding Graduate University for providing a program of self-directed learning. The concept of me controlling my learning is important. I have learned so much from choosing my course of study and setting my own pace for learning. The faculty of the School of Educational Leadership and Change has impacted me as an educator. Through working with the faculty I am equipped with the necessary information to bring about change in schools.

There are many people to thank for their contributions to my education. To all of them I will be forever grateful.

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CHAPTER ONE

Introduction

“The American family is the rock on which a solid education can be built. I have seen examples all over the nation where two parent families, single parents, stepparents, grandparents, aunts, and uncles are providing strong family support for their children to learn. If families teach the love of learning, it can make all the difference in the world to children.”

Richard Riley
U.S. Secretary of Education
(Cordry & Wilson, 2004)

This study addresses the issue of parental involvement in the education of elementary school age children. This first chapter includes a statement of the problem, definitions of key terms, the purpose of the study, the historical context of the problem, limitations of the study, and the significance of the study.

Parental involvement is a key issue for educators. This study will seek to answer questions concerning parents' involvement in their children's education. The history of parental involvement is extensive and must be examined in order to understand the issues confronting educators and parental partnerships. Once the history of parental involvement is examined as well as current perspectives on the issue, it will be necessary to identify the quality parental involvement programs. The focus of this study is to provide schools with a program model that will assist them in creating a school parental involvement program that will acquire and maintain parent support and participation.

Statement of the Problem

In an era of increased accountability where the local and federal government mandate that teachers increase student test scores, educators find themselves relying on a variety of resources to assist them in their work in achieving the highest level of student achievement.

Parental participation in the educational program is one of the more important resources that will yield results. According to Steinberg (1996), student commitment to education is at an all time low regardless of their parents' socioeconomic status. Many children do not hold education in the highest regard and thus do not perform well academically. Teachers recognize that with parental involvement comes a partnership that reaches out to students in the achievement of academics as well as personal excellence. Teachers also recognize that there is a need for quality parental involvement programs that have meaning and the necessary resources to attract parents to the schools. We know that by the time a student is ready to graduate from high school, he/she will have spent approximately 76% of their time with parents and 24% of their time with teachers (Cordry & Wilson, 2004). How can teachers and parents working together find a process that will be successful and meaningful to assist the student? This research examined the issues of parent involvement and in particular, why parents are not involved.

Research tells us that when parents are involved in the education of their child, student achievement increases (Rathbone, 1997; Shockley, Michaelove, & Allen, 1995; Batey, 1996; Lareau, 2000). All concur that if students are to succeed, parental involvement is mandatory. However, the word quality is the key here. In order to be able to offer/provide quality programs where parents can and will become involved as well as stay involved, good programs need to be identified. Oftentimes parents get involved with the affairs of the school only to lose interest later for many reasons, one of which is an inadequate program. This study examined quality programs and offers these programs as guidelines for schools that are seeking to enhance their parental involvement programs.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of the study is to gather information about quality parent involvement programs and to explore the need and future development of a successful model or models for involving parents in the education of their children.

Research Questions

The research questions that will serve as the overriding premise to meet the goals and objectives of this study include:

1. What are the issues facing parents and their involvement in education?
2. What are schools doing to get parents involved?
3. What are the characteristics of a quality parental involvement program?

Historical Background

The history of parental involvement is extensive. Berger (1995) detailed in earlier times where schooling was less important than survival skills and parents were solely responsible for educating their children. During colonial times, students of White wealthy parents were taught in their homes and schools where the emphasis was on religion and culture (Cutler, 2000). As the world moved closer together, the great tradition of education from ancient Greece and Rome and medieval Europe began to impact all subsequent Western education, thus the need for formal teaching and training.

This need for formal schools began to take shape during the late colonial times due to the lack of necessary teaching skills of parents in order to garner academic achievement. The schools then became solely responsible for directing learning. Cutler (2000) indicated that as soon as formal schools became more involved with educating students, parents began to feel left out. Students were no longer receiving an education that focused on the importance of religion

and culture. The education of children became more formal as did the relationship among parents and teachers. Teachers were focused primarily on academics and with getting results.

Additionally, there were pseudo parents, such as the government, acting on behalf of children. For example, for many years African Americans could not go to school to receive a formal education. Although the African American parents wanted an education for themselves and their children, the government felt that it was best that they not receive a proper education because African Americans represented cheap labor. This was a tactic on the government's part to keep a group of people in total bondage (Spring, 1994). When African Americans were able to go to school and receive a formal education, due to the enactment of the Emancipation Proclamation. Key African Americans acted as teachers to educate their young. As the need for formal educators began to grow, the government in its so called "wisdom" still required that African Americans were not entitled to a formal education and the government would set the parameters as to who could provide this education to the African American. The Separate but Equal clause dictated that African Americans could be educated but not alongside their White counterparts (Aquila & Petze, 1995). African American parents have had the government acting as a pseudo parent in the education of their children's lives for so long that this finally created a division among educators and African American parents.

Mexican Americans immigrating to the United States were extremely reluctant to send their children to school, but for different reasons. American farmers needed labor and Mexican children were allowed to work no matter their age. Children who were of school age worked in the fields, instead of going to school as they helped to provide for their families. The need for survival outweighed the need for an education and as such was insensitive to the language barriers that confronted Mexicans entering the country (Spring, 1994).

The history of parental involvement is extensive and provides the foundation for the current problem. According to Steinberg, (1996) student commitment to education is at an all time low regardless of their parents' socioeconomic standings. This study also examined the history of parents' commitment to education and how this impacts the commitment of their children. Educators seek parental support to boost student achievement but parents are not involved to the extent expected. This creates an unharmonious relationship between parents and schools. But perhaps, educators are not the only ones who are crying out for help.

Limitations of the Study

The study is limited to the participants and the quality programs presented at two schools located in the State of Georgia. The students come from many background and socioeconomic standings. One school has approximately 1,600 students while the second school supports approximately 600 students.

Significance of the Study

Goals 2000 (U.S. Department of Education, 1994) and the No Child Left Behind Act (U.S. Government, 2001) established by national legislation, mandate the inclusion of parents into the equation of increased student achievement. Schools have as a goal and a responsibility to get parents involved and to retain their participation. This was not the first time parental involvement was deemed important. Berger (1995) identified Comenius, Locke, Rousseau, Pestalozzi, and Froebel as key theorists of parents in education. These theorists had various beliefs on how children should be educated and the role parents played in educating students. One theme was consistent: parents were important to the process. This study will seek to provide some answers to the questions educators and parents have about this important prerequisite to student achievement.

Definition of Terms

Parental involvement- parents participating in their children's education in a wide variety of ways (Shore, 1994, p. 13).

Goals 2000 (U.S. Department of Education, 1994)-a set of goals for education created by the United State Government that dictated the focus of education.

No Child Left Behind (U.S. Government, 2001) - an act created by the United State Government in 2001 that mandates schools provide a quality education to all students by using research based instruction practices and focusing on parental involvement.

Webster's Third New International Dictionary edited by Philip Badcock Gove defined the following terms:

Cross cultural- dealing with or offering comparison between two or more different cultures or cultural areas. (p. 541).

Indigenous people- native; not introduced directly or indirectly into a particular land. (p. 1151).

Mentor/Mentoring- a close, trusted, and experienced counselor or guide; teacher, tutor, or coach. (p. 1412).

Training – to instruct or drill in habits of thought or action; to teach or exercise (someone) in an art, profession, trade, or occupation. (p. 2424).

Summary

Chapter 1 provides a framework for this study. The study will answered several questions about parental involvement as well as taking an in-depth look at the history of parental involvement. The completed study identified quality parental involvement programs and was designed to empower educators with knowledge on how to create a quality program.

Subsequent chapters provide a review of the literature, methodology for the study, findings, and conclusions. The review of the literature is organized to offer answers to why parents are not as involved and to report on perspectives and research concerning parental involvement. The methodology chapter provides the detailed description of how this research was be carried out. The findings of the completed research are detailed in chapter 4. The final chapter of the dissertation serves as a conclusion for the research.

CHAPTER TWO

Literature Review

In chapter 2, information and data concerning parental involvement are the topic focus. Subsequent chapters present information concerning parental involvement, background of the problem, race and parental involvement, current perspectives, legislation, areas of involvement, and research completed on the topic.

Background of the Problem

There are a series of old issues as well as new issues that prevent full parental participation in education. Parents were once the directors of their children's learning and were replaced when the need came for formal schools. With the creation of formal schools, parents and teachers shared the responsibility of educating children. As the roles were shared, parents began to experience divisions between themselves and schools. For example, parents received reports on their children's progress rather than discussing with the teacher the progress of the student. In more recent years, educators have demanded more of parents due to the demands to increase student achievement placed on the educators by the systems of federal, state, and local government. The initial issues of parental involvement continue to be manifested in the current issues.

Previous Issues

Berger (1995) opined that in older times children were not formally educated. Parents were the teachers and taught their children how to survive. The practice of intergenerational teaching and learning began a cycle. One generation taught the second generation and the second generation taught the third (p. 5). During the times spanning 3500- 476 A.D., Berger's research revealed that students continued to be educated at home. Children of the aristocracy

were formally educated, although tutoring was one of the principal educational methods.

Remembering the example of Alexander the Great's education by the philosopher Aristotle, there was no formal system for this education. Plato and Aristotle believed that the education of children should be for the benefit of the state rather than for the benefit of the family; children were to be educated to play a major role in society. In Rome, the belief that parents were the children's first and most important teachers took root. The mother taught the children to read and the father taught sons physical skills (Berger, 1995).

In Greece, during the 6th century B.C., the government mandated that parents were responsible for teaching their children (Berger, 1995). In many instances, children were viewed as pieces of property and many parents did not feel it was necessary to educate their property. In other instances, parents were not adequately educated enough to teach their children. Yet, children learned what they could from their families without the formal system of education. In contrast, children who were from higher socioeconomic statuses did receive some type of education. Children of nobility were taught social skills in addition to academics in their homes. Due to the varying views on the education of children, theorists began to formulate philosophies on the education of children that would impact student achievement for years to come (Berger, 1995).

During the Middle Ages, Woodson (2000) informs that various theorists contributed to education and parental involvement. Comenius (1592-1670) believed that education begins at home and provided a detailed description of just how children should be educated. Comenius's belief is the very foundation for the schools of today; parental involvement is needed for students to truly achieve. Just as Comenius believed in the impact of parents, educators of today believe

in the same thing. Comenius's belief would be the foundation for other theorists' philosophies that would impact how children would be educated.

John Locke (1632-1744) proposed the concept of the *tabula rasa*. He believed that children were born with a mind that was like a blank slate and that this slate was filled based on their experiences. Locke did not view mental ability as innate and emphasized that the family must provide experiences in order for their children's minds to develop (Berger, 1995). Another theorist, Jean Jacques Rousseau (1712-1778) emphasized the freedom of children. Like Locke, he wanted mothers to cultivate the minds of their children, minds that needed to be nurtured with knowledge. Rousseau proposed that children would only be as successful as the depth of education they received. Johann Pestalozzi (1746-1827) relied and expanded on the teachings of Rousseau through the use of manipulatives to teach children. He believed in making real life connections to the concepts being taught and used manipulatives such as pebbles to teach counting and cakes to teach fractions. Pestalozzi also placed great emphasis on group instruction which is an area of focus for today's educators. In addition to Comenius, Locke, Rousseau, and Pestalozzi, Fredrich Froebel (1782-1852) would also impact education in a profound way by creating the first kindergarten. Kindergarten was created to bridge the gap between home and school. Parents and educators alike agreed that students needed a period of adjustment prior to entering school for the first time. Students would attend a program that would prepare them for formal schooling. Many theorists played a major role in influencing education as well as influencing parental involvement in education.

In the United States, colonial times brought about a shift in the way children were taught (Cutler, 2000). Initially they were taught in homes and then in schools. Parents helped to educate their children to perform duties specific to everyday life. Girls made candles or sewed

while boys learned how to farm and hunt. The shift occurred when it was recognized that some parents were not educated well enough, thus unable to teach their children reading and writing, a fact which constituted a need for formal schools (Cutler, 2000). However, Cutler argued that the home was still responsible for the moral education of the students. For a period of time schools and homes shared the responsibility. In 1840, the bureaucracy of that era divided the homes and the schools. The teaching of parents and others was superseded by teachers who had a formal education. The once dialogical interactions that went on between parents and teachers were replaced with pieces of paper called report cards (Goodlad, 1984). Parents were once able to incorporate their native culture into the teaching of their children since the home and school shared the responsibility. Parents normally afforded their children the opportunity to experience the family's language, but schools became totally academic which left little opportunity to celebrate cultures. Parents realized this change and actively sought to solve the problem by going to the schools and voicing their concerns with the way children were or not being educated by the schools (Collins, 1998). Parents voicing their disagreements with the education system created friction between the home and schools. The relationship between the teachers and parents would continue to experience differences in opinions as the education system continued to control learning (Goodlad, 1984).

Before 1860, schools were responsible for educating children and the community was responsible for monitoring the schools, thus encouraging an even wider division between home and school. Cutler (2000) details how Emma Hart, a school superintendent in Kensington, Connecticut, sought to alleviate some of the friction between schools and the home by enlisting the support of women to help support the schools of the area. The group created the Female Common School Association and the goal of the organization was to seek extra pay for teachers,

financial contributions for library books, and volunteer their time in the schools (p. 19). Their volunteering entailed hearing student recitals and viewing their work. These efforts were designed to support an educational system that seemed to be in a state of disarray. The home and school were not working together as they once were and it was soon noted that there was a need for intervention. There would continue to be a series of endeavors by parents and teachers to bridge the gaps between home and school.

The Hypsperia movement of 1885-1886 was another endeavor by women to bridge the gap between home and school and was deemed an important initiative that brought about a series of changes (Collins, 1998). The women created an association among themselves and farmers in the community to address educational and agricultural concerns. They held meetings and these meetings allowed everyone to express their concerns and commitments to public school education. In 1896, the Public Education Association (PEA) sponsored lectures for mothers on curriculum and pedagogy (Cutler, 2000). The year of 1897 brought about an adoption for educational reform from the National Congress of Mothers (NCM) and launched the first official campaign for parents and teachers in 1904 (Millstein & Bodin, 1977). In 1905, a parent teacher association appeared for the first time in Boston schools. The various initiatives sought to bridge the gaps between home and schools. Mother and father clubs were in full existence with everyone trying to seek solutions to the problems between home and school relations.

In the 1950s, Parent Teacher Associations (PTA) began to focus so much on what parents were doing wrong that they neglected to include parents in the decision being made in education (Massaro, 2000). The associations did not focus on how schools and parents could better work together but rather on how to help parents to be better parents. PTAs began to become more social organizations rather than focusing on academics. Although there were changes in the

original organizations that were created to link home and schools, parents were still connected with their children's teachers. Good relationships were still existent and parents continued to help schools to educate their children. It is imperative that schools be cognizant of the past issues with such organizations in order to provide for better structuring of newer organizations.

The Civil Rights period of the 1960s brought about a huge division between schools and parents (Cutler, 2000; Fuller & Olson, 1998). In 1896, the Supreme Court ruled in the case of *Plessey vs Ferguson* that facilities for Blacks and Whites could be separate as long as those for the Blacks were not inferior to those of their White counterparts. Yet, Blacks continued to be educated in schools that were not comparable to those of their White peers. Fuller and Olson (1998) deemed the case of *Brown vs Board of Education of Topeka, Kansas* (1954) as one of the most important legal cases ever. Linda Brown and several other Black children were forced to attend Black only schools. The parents of the children took the issue to the Supreme Court to change the law of separate but equal. With other justices, Thurgood Marshall, then the first African American to be appointed to the Supreme Court, ruled in favor of the plaintiffs. The winning resulted in a call for full desegregation of schools. As a result of *Brown vs Board of Education*, the separate but equal clause would be no more and it would mark one of the federal government's first intervention in the affairs of schools (Collinson, Knight & Collinson, 1990). Previously school affairs had been left up to the state and local boards. The federal government's decision and the relationship between parents and schools soon became strained. In the 1960s, parents were still boycotting schools because of the decision of the Supreme Court. Whites did not want their children to go to school with Black children. The divisions between homes and schools would continue to expand (Tate, Ladson-Billings & Grant, 1993).

Another issue that expanded the divisions between homes and schools was the growth in strength and participation of teachers' unions. The unions had as their focus to make teachers powerful and in charge (Cutler, 2000). Teachers demanded rights which often entailed them participating in strikes in order to be heard. Although some parents agreed that teachers should be properly compensated, their larger focus was to ensure that their children were receiving the best education. This further strained the relationship between families and schools because teachers had as a goal to seek justice for their positions and parents had a priority to seek an education for their children (Healey, 1990).

Parents' involvement in their children's education began to increase as a result of increased teacher strikes. Teachers were not in place to educate the children, thus requiring parents to get involved to seek an education for their children. Teachers continued to speak out and the Parents' Union for Public Schools (PUPS) was started by parents as a support system for teachers. According to Cutler (2000), the parents had a focus that was two-fold: ensuring a quality education for their children and supporting teacher's efforts to be properly compensated. The goals of PUPS began to change. It started out as a support system for schools to bring about change and then it became a business. It began to serve clients, those parents having specific issues with education. After having served clients for some time, PUPS then shifted to creating harmony among schools and parents. The shift occurred because the organization had overlooked its goal to provide for education of all children.

Other Issues

The history of parental participation in education has provided a foundation for other issues parents face today. There have been serious changes in the American family, thus bringing about changes in parental involvement (Collins, 1998; Gordon & Brievoegel, 1976;

Morrison, 1995). It is important to examine some of these issues facing educators and parents in order to seek some resolution to the problem.

Morrison (1995) identified nuclear, extended, and single parent families as important in understanding parental participation. The nuclear family that exists today is not similar to the family that existed years ago consisting of a two-parent household with one or more children. The single family household, a predominant household today, seems to be the group experiencing most issues in terms of getting involved with the school program (Ladson-Billings, 1994). A single-parent household consists of one parent with children with fewer resources available. Single parents are required to spend large amounts of time working to provide the basic needs for their children (Healey, 1998). Extended families are described as other relatives living in the household with the parent or parents(s). Gordon and Brievogel (1976) warned that families' accessibility to extended families would decrease. Single parents tend to live where they can afford to live and these accommodations sometimes do not allow them access to their extended families which may include grandparents, aunts, uncles, and others for assistance. Thus, parents or the single parent has only themselves to depend on in the rearing of their children. They are then encouraged to consult with experts to help solve some of the problems they are facing, particularly, providing moral education to their children who experience a sometimes immoral society. Single families are least likely to be represented in schools and have many issues which hinder full parental support of the school program (Dietz and Whaley (1997; Gordon and Brievogel, 1976; Ladson-Billings, 1994; Ladson-Billings, 2005). They identified the lack of quality relationships, language barriers, and inappropriate assignments as other possible reasons that prevent parental involvement in the educational process (p. 23). Other researchers opined that quality relationships do not exist because schools are not reaching out to

relate to parents as they should. In their analysis, schools tend to cater to the middle class status quo which does not necessarily meet the needs for those in the lower socioeconomic brackets (p. 25).

The students who populate American today's schools come from a variety of ethnic backgrounds and speak diverse languages (Ladson-Billings, 2005). Parents of different cultures feel devalued as part of the American society and recognize the rationale that occurs as a result of their socioeconomic level as well as their culture. In addition to biases towards status quo and ethnic backgrounds inappropriate assignments and feedback to volunteers impeded true participation (p. 4). Oftentimes, the demands placed on teachers to increase test scores carries over to the assignments they give parents. Thus, teachers expect parents to teach skills to the proficiency level that they are taught in the classroom (Morrison, 1995). In many instances, due to the varying educational, training levels parents are not able to reinforce the skills many teachers expect of them. Tasks assigned to parents should be manageable and not require them to have formal teaching experience in order to complete the task (p. 11). Educators must recognize the practices that prevent good home-school relations and take the necessary steps to correct these issues.

Negative attitudes impede good relationships (Christenson & Sheridan, 2001). Often there is resistance among educators to increase home and school relations due to the existence of bias. Families should be seen for what they are and not for what they ought to be. Some families are doing the best with what they've have. Stereotypical views of students from different cultures must be eliminated. So often, educators show their negative attitudes that parents are reluctant to be involved. Differences should be seen as strengths to the educational program rather than as weaknesses. Christenson and Sheridan warned of the win-lose attitudes possessed

by educators who tend to expect all of the benefits of parental involvement and often do not address parental needs (p. 20). I recognize that as people interact, disagreements will occur between home and school. Those involved tend to take the experiences personally rather than as an opportunity to compromise and grow. It is critical that families and educators always have a focus to make decisions that are in the best interest of the child and eliminate the need to feel as though they have succeeded personally. Attitudes play a critical role in fostering or hindering the relationships among parents and schools. It is imperative that schools and parents focus on having positive attitudes towards each other in order for children to be successful (Ladson-Billings, 1994).

Personal experiences often contribute to parents' attitudes about education (Barbour, Barbour, & Scully, 2001; Reglin, 1993; Wiencek, 2003). Parents tend to view education the way they experienced it when they were students in school. Negative experiences as children will often carry over to negative attitudes when they are adults seeking an education for their own child. Educators are encouraged to be empathetic to this possibility. Educators also may carry negative experiences into the relationship with parents (Warner & Curry, 1997). When teachers have consistently had unhealthy interactions with parents, they are reluctant to enlist the support of families in educating children. The commitment that is required to spark relationships with families is just too much for some educators and the give and take required may not seem worth it (p. 90).

Shockley et al. (1995) warned of the difference in views parents and educators have for educating children. Families may not believe in the phonetic spelling of words, that is, spelling words the way they sound. The children are taught in school to phonetically spell words in the lower grades, but at home the parents expect children to always spell words correctly (p. 24-25).

Shockley et al. suggested that educators need to be aware of the differences in teaching methods and respect parents' methods. It is imperative to not undermine parents. However, culturally because many educators challenge their views and methods, parents tend not to participate in schools (Ladson-Billings, 2005).

Another reason that home and school relationships suffer is that the largeness of school districts can impede home school relationships (Gordon & Brievogel, 1996). Historically, schools maintained constant communication with parents. Currently, many districts are so large that an atmosphere that is conducive to close interactions among families and schools does not exist. Personal relationships have been replaced by more business-like relationships. Cutler, (2000) claimed that districts are mainly focused on students' academic performance more than they are concerned with the social and psychological health of students. Such a focus often leads many parents to believe that their children are only important if their children score at particular levels on national and statewide exam (p. 17). Thus, it would lead one to believe that their relationships can only be of a business nature with schools, which seldom meets the needs of the parents. In some instances parents do not live near the schools where their children attend and teachers aren't teaching in their communities. This was a major factor in many districts due to court-ordered integration of schools (Banks, 2006). It is very difficult for parents to be involved with schools that are not in their home community. Teachers tend to work in schools away from their homes and are not easily available to connect with parents. These factors serve to prevent the connections that make for a good relationship between home and school.

Social class is identified as another reason parents are not involved (Kellagan, Sloane, Alvarez, & Bloom, 1993; King, 1995; Lareau, 2000). Oftentimes parents view themselves as not worthy to be in schools because they are not as adequately educated as the staff in the school.

This is particularly prevalent with minority parents. Socio-economic status should not play a part in how teachers grade students and educators must make every effort to give students the best opportunity to be successful. Parents can play a key role in achieving many of the goals that educators have for children if they feel they are valued as individuals (Ladson-Billings, 2005). Educators must not hold children responsible for their low socioeconomic status merely because educators are not able to relate to parents (Delpit, 1995).

The previous issue of parents being left out in the education of their children and the current issue of the diversity of America are all factors contributing to the full implementation of parent and teacher partnerships (Ladson-Billings, 1994). These issues must be addressed if educators and parents are truly to make a difference in the lives of students. Success will only come when effective relationships are established (Banks, 2006). Educators can initiate change by eliminating biases towards certain socioeconomic statuses, race, and family make-up of children and their families.

Race and Parental Involvement

There is a need to understand the role of race in relation to parental involvement in order to reduce biases in the interactions between schools and families (Delpit, 1995). This gap can be bridged by closely examining how a student's race and culture, and that of their parents influence their relationship with the school.

Banks, 2002 established that single families and African American families are underrepresented when it comes to parental involvement. African American families oftentimes see schools as institutions that have failed them and are likely to fail their children (p. 11). African Americans have consistently fought for their rightful place in American society and see the education of their children to be a likely struggle. Although the Civil Rights era brought

about much division among Blacks and Whites, Blacks will never give up on the American dream of acquiring a solid education for their children

(p. 13). It is imperative that educators realize that African American families do care about their children's education but have reservations about making connections with schools (Ladson-Billings, 1994). In some instances, families feel that schools are only concerned with the education of middle and high income families. For the families that live in poverty stricken areas they see the biases towards status quos as an obstacle

(p. 35). Additionally, at-risk parents often live in crowded neighborhoods plagued by drugs. This can oftentimes discourage parents when they are seeking a better way of life for their children. Parents work hard to provide a better way of life for their children only to be met with the obstacles of bias towards their economic class and negative community influences (p. 37).

There are ways for educators to include the Black family in order to have their support. It was Ladson-Billings (2005) who put forth the formal stipulation that educators must identify the immediate needs of African American families through directly interacting and getting feedback from these families concerning the education of their children (p. 33). As a result of interacting, relationships will grow and biases will be diminished as African Americans begin to take on a more active role in schools. Schools must also publicize the involvement of these families in White areas through the use of the media or whatever way makes for the best practice (Lareau, 2000). It is important to change attitudes concerning Blacks and their involvement in the schools and one means for accomplishing this is to include them in the decision-making process of the school. African Americans must be viewed as valuable contributors to the school program. Families must be assured that racial discrimination will not be tolerated in the school; there will be no singling out of the Black, Hispanic, or other minority students. Furthermore, involvement

in schools requires time away from jobs that are vital to the survival of the family which some parents just cannot afford. When families come from extreme levels of poverty, some may need to be paid in order to become involved. In response to the lowered expectations that educators have for African American students, Reglin (1993) encouraged an increase in expectations. Families are more likely to support schools that have high expectations and communicate these expectations for all children.

The history of Hispanics in the American public school system is not terribly different from that of African Americans. The Hispanic-American racial group is comprised mostly of Mexicans and Puerto Ricans. Carrasquillo and London (1993) identified this group as consisting of 1st, 2nd, and 3rd generation immigrants who have simultaneously uprooted their families and have come to America seeking a better way of life (p. 55)

The America perceived by these individuals is different from the America that greets them upon arrival. For many, language barriers face them upon entering the country. Mexicans and Mexican Americans populate much of the Southwest and suffer the most academically of the Hispanic Americans (Valdez, 2001). The American curriculum does not adequately address the Mexican culture. The Puerto Ricans come to America with both advantages and disadvantages with Puerto Ricans having an advantage over Mexican Americans in that most are educated in English as a second language in their home (Puerto Rican) schools (Hooks, 1994). However, Carrasquillo and London (1993) attributed the downfall of Puerto Ricans in America to the decline in manufacturing jobs because they relied on the labor and service industries to provide for their families and when these types of jobs are not available, Puerto Ricans experience further poverty. Additionally, the lack of jobs and the lack of money may be a cause for Puerto Ricans

to suffer due to increased living expenses often associated with living in urban areas (Gay, 2000).

The majority of Hispanics are poor and Hispanic children are a group within a group not valued by many White Americans (Gonzales, 1999). Biases towards Hispanics disallow educators to truly understand the challenges facing this group of people. Many Hispanic families are comprised of single parent homes mostly headed by women and oftentimes these families consist of extended family members. It is not uncommon to have a cousin or distant relative living in the family until their economic condition improves (p. 67). It is historically known that the sense of family is held in high regard in the Hispanic community, which may or may not be realized by educators (Meier & Steward, 1991). Hispanic families experience adversities similar to African Americans in that they must fight the “streets” in trying to raise their children. Hispanics are exposed to a culture in their schools and communities that is different from their own culture. The two cultures clash within the home and negative environmental influences impede the appreciation of culture that the parents try to teach their children (Gay, 2000).

Carrasquillo and London (1993) determined that the Hispanic family holds themselves responsible for passing on social skills and seeking a quality education for their children. Families are identified as the primary support system and schools are secondary when social crises arise. Additionally, while Hispanic families totally support the education program, oftentimes they do not receive the same amount of support from schools in educating their children (McLaren & Munoz, 2000). When there is an issue, many families do not have the necessary skills to sit down with teachers and discuss the issue allegedly due to language barriers and biases towards Hispanic culture and social class. Thus, the silence of Hispanics and Hispanic Americans is encouraged. Educators must be aware of this practice and seek

alternatives to eliminate passive involvement. Educators must be aware that Hispanic families do seek a better life for their children but may not feel welcomed into schools in the way they should (Gonzales, 1999).

Although there are many obstacles Hispanics face with involvement in schools, there are ways to increase their involvement (Garcia, 2001). Language barriers can be alleviated through the use of bilingual letters from school to home. Newsletters should be written in English and in Spanish for parents to know fully what is going on in the schools with their children. When Hispanic parents come to school there should be interpreters to assist them with the language. Hispanic parents also can rely on their children when assisting them with lessons. Children are great at absorbing the information provided at school and can provide a model for how the homework is to be done. Parents can then reinforce the skills taught at school. The educating of Hispanic American children requires a commitment between teachers and parents. If Hispanics and Hispanic American children are to achieve, the relationships between the schools and their families must be improved (pp. 89-90)

The Asian-American family receives more attention from Americans with regard to their children's performance in schools in the areas of standardized test performance (Minami, 2001). Oftentimes they are portrayed as a group that receives little criticism because of the high academic performance of their students. On the other hand, Asian-Americans also have another history in America that warrants attention by educators. Wing (1997) stated that this population may be the most diverse of all minorities since Asians in America come from numerous countries which include Japan, China, Korea, Vietnam, and the Philippines. However, these groups do not totally share common religions or languages. So, it is imperative for educators to not generally categorize all Asians. There is a culture present but it consists of sub-cultures;

groups of Asians have different characteristics from other groups of Asians even if they belong to the same group, such as the Chinese (Minami, 2001). Generally, these diverse groups of Asians have come to the U.S. because of political uprisings in their countries. As with many immigrants, Asians come with the dream of making money and returning home.

In 1840, the Chinese were the first group of Asians to come to America. They came primarily to study or to join relatives who were already in America. Japanese immigrants began to enter the United States in 1886 (Carrasquillo & London, 1993). This group is perhaps the most established of all of the Asians because they have a high number of people with higher degrees. In 1903 the Koreans populated the land as they sought freedom. The Korean War, in which North and South Korea were engaged in war over territory, brought even a further influx of Koreans into the U. S. as many Koreans sought peace.

Once they arrived in the United States, Asian Americans experienced hardship (Low, 1982). Many were employed in the labor force, working for very little money and businesses took advantage of them. As a result many of them lived in the same communities which were poverty stricken. They populated metropolitan areas together because it allowed them to maintain some of their heritage. Some Asian American parents spent a large amount of time away from their families because of the demands of work. Many dimensions of the American experience were not consistent with the culture Asian Americans had experienced in their homeland (p. 46).

In response to a better education for their children Asian parents sought an educational system that would include a motivation and inspiration to their children in the study of science, technology, and mathematics (Lee, 2001). Parents are fully cognizant that these are the areas where children will be more likely to achieve success and be financially stable, unlike their

parents in the labor industry (Minami, 2001). Asian parents stress memorization as the preferred form of learning and much of their time at home is spent on preparing for tests rather than on social skills. Asian children are then met by educators who may well be insensitive to a culture that is emphatically different from American culture. Wing, (1997), found that Asian children do not speak out as the American children do and tend to work individually while American children seem to prefer to work in groups. In order to provide a total education experience for Asian children, educators must be aware of Asian culture and how it can be unlike the culture of the United States.

The Asian culture is markedly different from what Americans are familiar. In Asian culture, it is not customary to show emotions in confronting situations. They are taught to focus on the benefit of the whole rather than their own personal benefits (Carrasquillo & London, 1993). Children are not praised openly to prevent gloating which interferes with the harmony they are taught to create. American educators must be careful to not criticize the parents of these children but accept their differences as strengths.

No one culture is inferior to another culture. Educators must be cognizant of the Asian cultures and all other groups of people by taking the necessary steps to include them in the vision for schools. The value most cherished by our different cultures is instilling the value of education in their children, but it may not exist in an American form that encourages parents to volunteer at school. However, Asian parents are consistent with sending their children to school regularly which is a major component of parental involvement. In more recent years, Asian Americans have also been involved by voicing their approvals and disapprovals with American education (Lee, 2001).

According to Gordon and Brievogel (1976), various ethnic groups seek to be valued as part of America. All want to be acknowledged for their contributions to society. The parents want their heritage to be a part of the curriculum so that their children can embrace the old and the new culture. America is diverse, its schools are diverse, and the knowledge learned is just as diverse. Educators must grasp the ideals of these parents in order to truly improve schools.

Perspectives

Many theorists have varying perspectives when it comes to getting parents involved; some advocate programs while others promote partnerships. Warner and Curry (1997) attributed the breakdown of interactions between home and school to the violence and the demise of the American family. If true, educators have a more important task in order to bridge the gaps between families and schools. There are many issues such as the differing opinions between families and schools when it comes to educating children that are the underlying causes for the poor participation in our nation's schools (Gardner, 2004).

Gardner found that parental demands stem from parents wanting more as a result of the demand from industries and government agencies for better educated employees. Parents place increasing demands on the educational system as the institution primarily responsible for imparting knowledge that will lead to the better educated employee. DeCarvalho (2001) supported the notion of parents being subordinate to the school program in that parents should not be expected to teach academic skills. If schools are to improve, they must have as a focus understanding parental concerns and providing the best education for students.

The idea of world class schools is important to communities and the community has a vested interest in student education (Deitz & Whaley, 1997). Dietz and Whaley noted that the community has a devotion to quality teaching and learning outcomes for students. Decker and

Decker (2003) affirmed that the 1990s brought about changes in schools and the schools must now be operated as if they belong to the community for indeed they do. Parents, schools, and the community must join forces in order to reach the goal of collaboration among communities, families, and schools to ensure student success. Morrison (1995) believed in three goals for public schools: political, social, and economic. Schools are designed to prepare students for citizenship, to aid in social development, and to look for talent. These goals will be accomplished but only with the assistance of parents. Commitments must come from the highest level. System superintendents and school boards are identified as additional resources to assist schools and parents with making connections (Barclay & Boone, 1996).

Barclay and Boone (1996) reinforced the family as a durable institution. The family is the group that provides educational and non-educational experiences. All of these experiences come to school with a child. It is wise for educators to take into account that children come from all walks of life and that in order to meet their needs they must respect these experiences. Gordon and Brievogel (1976) identified the family as setting the stage for self-concept. The authors stated that teachers cannot be held totally accountable for student achievement because home life plays an even more important role in achievement. Gordon and Brievogel further revealed that parents truly want what is best for their children but their self-esteem impacts the self-esteem of their children. The experiences students have with low parental self-esteem are oftentimes manifested in their self-esteem. Educators need to assist parents to provide quality experiences for students in addition to taking the necessary steps in assisting parents to raise their own self-esteem (p. 101).

Parents are consumers, partners, and citizens. (Vincent, 2000). As consumers, they are stakeholders because they will benefit from the service schools provide and the results are a

direct reflection of their investments. Secondly, they assist with meeting of the goal of increased student achievement by offering support for the academic program. Finally, they are part of the community and the community has a stake in schools. Bloom (1992) supported the idea of parents being involved in organizations that can bring about change at the local, district, and state levels. These organizations, such as the PTA, can assist parents in their civic responsibilities to ensure an education for all children. Parents have much to lose or gain from involvement initiatives.

Canton and Allen (1995) determined that through having parents involved, they will gain a greater understanding of education. The experiences that parents have as volunteers should help them as well as the educational program. Canton and Allen suggested that educators should help families in crisis, those with chronic illness, divorce, and abuse. Banks (2002) has suggested that achievement of low socioeconomic students will remain low until schools and systems educate the parents. On the other hand, Canton and Allen (1995) warned against schools insisting on telling parents what they are doing wrong. It is suggested that parents be the ones directing their learning when participating in workshops designed to assist them. The programs created should be ever changing and the focus of parent education workshops should change as parents deem it necessary. Parental involvement extends far beyond just getting parents into the school because there must also be direct benefit for the parent involved such as support groups for parents who have specific needs.

Christenson and Sheridan (2001) focused on attitudes and the creation of relationships as vital to parental involvement. Attitudes are manifested through the interactions of the school and home. Positive attitudes, such as parents supporting school and schools supporting parents, create the foundation for healthy relationships. Negative attitudes foster strained relationships

between families and schools. Those involved in parental involvement must realize the importance of attitudes in helping or hindering the educational program (pp. 86-87).

Barbour, Barbour, and Scully (2001) focus on children's attitudes about education that are affected by school influence, home, and community influences. Children's attitudes are affected by school personnel who either exhibit a positive or negative attitude towards the children. Parental attitudes are picked up by children very early in their lives. In fact, children perform better when their parents are involved (Canton and Allen, 1995). In a time where the community plays a significant role in influencing a child, children reflect the community beliefs. Those aspects of school that are deemed important by the community influence the aspects deemed important by students. Communities often place great emphasis on sports rather than on academic achievement and the importance of academic achievement is of lesser importance than athletics. Communities must be careful and ensure that they are sending children the right messages. Children mimic the various attitudes they are exposed to and this either aids or impairs the creation of relationships.

Swap (1993) placed great emphasis on partnerships which are defined as alliances between parents and educators to focus on success for all students. Through true partnerships, a great support system is formed; parents and schools both win. When schools and parents collaborate, roles are not isolated but are harmonious (Gay, 2000). The forever changing minority demographics of America is another reason educators must seek parents' support. Parents and teachers who partner with each other can readily address issues associated with diversity. Getting to know families will provide teachers with the information to adequately work with and enjoy the children they are educating (p. 65).

Shephard and Rose (1995) in their study found that some schools are misinformed about what a quality parental involvement program entails. Schools engage parents in a series of activities that have no correlation to each other, which is not a true depiction parental involvement. The authors suggest that a comprehensive program, which consists of activities for parents to be involved in such as school programs, volunteering in the classroom, and chaperoning trips are good, but parent education classes as identified by parents will increase parental involvement (p. 10). Parents who are empowered first as parents will be better able to support other school activities.

Many of the current perspectives of parental involvement are valid. In order to truly improve parental participation, parents and teachers must all work together to seek solutions to the problems facing children. Frequently, this will entail evaluating one's own beliefs about how children should be educated and taking the necessary step to foster positive relationships between homes and schools.

Legislation

Parents have been held legally responsible for their children's educations from time immemorial, according to Fuller and Olson (1998). Legislation is one of the most important determiners of mandates in parental involvement. As legislators meet to decide the direction of public school education, parental involvement must be part of the agenda. This portion of the study is devoted to presenting past and present key legislation.

Section 504 of the Rehabilitation act of 1973 specifies how schools are to handle special needs students who are experiencing difficulties in class (Heyward, 1992). Section 504 mandates the education of special education students as well as those who may be at-risk for failure. Student Support Teams (SST) were created to meet the requirement under Section 504.

Parents and teachers collaborate to seek solutions for students who experience difficulty in the school setting as well as for those who are receiving formal special education services. The Act mandates that all schools that receive federal funding participate in the process.

Public Law 94-142 of 1975, Education for All Handicapped Children, requires parents' involvement at the policy level (Ballard, Ramirez, & Zantal-Weiner, 1987). More importantly, parents of students who are impacted by this law must be a part of the process. The law mandates parent and teacher involvement in the development of a plan for individualized education programs (IEP). The plan details goals and objectives for students to master over specified time frames. The goals are reevaluated yearly when the parents and teachers create new goals for the student.

Public Law 93-380 requires the implementations of advisory councils (Toppings, 1986). The advisory councils were created for schools who receive federal funding. The councils are to consist of the majority of parents whose children receive services under any federal program. Currently, advisory councils consist of the principal, select teachers, and parent volunteers as council members. The members meet to discuss the continuous improvement of the school, such as setting goals for the school in the areas of student achievement. The law mandates that the council's suggestions be considered when school leaders are making decisions concerning the school.

Haar (2002) identified the Parent Teacher Association (PTA) as being responsible for the inclusion of parental involvement in Goals 2000 Educate America Act (U.S. Department of Education, 1994) because the original goals did not include parent participation in schools. The PTA, which is also a political organization, utilized this opportunity to incorporate its major

thrust through legislation. The legislature accepted the proposal of the PTA and incorporated the following in Public Law 103-227:

Goal 8: By the year 2000, every school will promote partnerships that will increase involvement and participation in promoting the social, emotional, and academic growth of children.” (U. S. Department of Education, 1994)

The goal was to set the guidelines for schools to incorporate parents into the whole school program. The states were identified as the source to support Local Education Agencies (LEA) in establishing parental involvement programs and every school was to actively engage parents. Additionally, the program identified families as those responsible for ensuring that the schools were supported in that parents were to take on an active role in the schools. The time frame for the completion of Goals 2000 has expired but the goal of parental involvement, along with other goals, is still being pursued by states, school systems, and schools.

The No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB, 2001) with its emphasis on elementary and secondary schools, currently impacts the implementation and regulation of all parental involvement programs. The act identifies the importance of parents in the equation of ensuring success for all students and the schools as the sources to actively engage parents. Public Law 107-110 identifies the following requirements:

- Local Educational Agencies are to establish parental involvement policy.
- Schools are to create parental involvement policy.
- The policy must include areas in which parents are involved.
- Parents and teachers are to focus on high expectations for students.
- Schools must build the capacity for involvement.

The Local Education Agency is identified as the source to execute the spending of federal money to involve parents. At least 1% of the funds disbursed to systems must be dedicated to

promoting literacy and parenting skills. Each school has the responsibility to develop a parental involvement policy along with parents and then schools are to distribute the policy to all parents. If schools currently operate under a different policy other than the one identified by No Child Left Behind, then that plan/policy is to be modified to meet the requirements of this legislation. Schools are to do the following for parents to be involved:

- Convene annual meetings to discuss NCLB.
- Offer flexible meetings so that parents can be involved.
- Involve parents in the organization and ongoing review of the program.
- Provide all parents timely information about the curriculum and suggestions on ways to participate.
- Forward comments of parents on the School Wide Program portion of the act.

Furthermore, there is to be a shared responsibility among parents and teachers when it comes to student achievement. Both parties are to have high expectations for students and these expectations are to be expressed through various communications such as reports that are easily accessible by all. The act provides examples of how schools may assist parents including providing training to assist them with teaching academics, pay reasonable expenses associated with involvement, and adopt and implement model approaches to improving parental involvement (pp. 3-4). No Child Left Behind has presented direct requirements of school systems and their schools in getting parents to be involved in the education of their children. Parental involvement initiatives at the school level are no longer an option but are mandatory.

While legislation has been centered on including parents in the goals of schools, it has not directly mandated that all parents be involved in the education setting. As more research is completed and the probability increases that more students will continue to fail, legislatures may

consider requiring that parents volunteer as a result of their children being a part of the school program.

Areas of Involvement

Researchers have identified various means to getting parents involved (Banks, 2002; Batey, 1996; Constantino, 2003; Dietz & Whaley, 1997; Ladson-Billings, 2005; and Morrison, 1995). Some of the identified ways for involvement include attending programs held at school, chaperoning field-trips, volunteering in areas of the school such as the office, and assisting with homework completion. The benefits of such involvement are extensive and researchers have shown that parental involvement will yield positive results (Batey, 1996; Hooks, 1994; Hughes, Wikeley, & Nash 1994; Shockley, Michealove, & Allen, 1995; and Swap, 1993). Such results are included in this portion of the study. Following is a review of the guidelines for programs proposed by researchers, as well as suggestions on how to involve parents in the school program.

Guidelines:

Morrison (1995) identified three essentials to involvement between schools and homes: It must be a developmental process, it must involve shared decision-making, and there must be a process to help parents to educate their children. There are four approaches identified by the author that are to be employed by schools:

- task approach, in which parents are involved to complete specific tasks.
- process approach, in which families are involved in certain aspects of school such as curriculum or PTA memberships.
- developmental approach, in which schools assist parents in meeting their own needs.

- comprehensive approach, which is a combination of the above approaches where the family is the center of the focus; parents have a lot of input. (p. 511-512)

Morrison stressed the comprehensive approach as the ideal approach in order to have a successful program.

When schools are preparing to create programs, Dietz and Whaley (1997) suggested that they utilize internal and external assessments. School administrators are instructed to use an evaluation tool to evaluate the school's strengths and weaknesses as far as parental involvement is concerned. In addition to the administrative evaluation, the community completes a similar evaluation of the school program. When the program is ready for implementation, it is suggested that a policy is put into place that identifies the appropriate amount of time that parents are to volunteer and that ongoing assessments are completed in order to guide the future of the program. Dietz and Whaley also suggested that parental involvement programs be implemented methodically in that the program should have short-term goals as well as long-term goals.

Barclay and Boone (1996) advocated school committees as the designated group to carry out the programs and that all stake holders play a part in the organizational structure of the committee. They further suggested the details of a parental involvement program. One component of the program was to include parenting skills as a focus. Parents are to be assisted by schools to meet the goals they have set for their children and the school must have identified resources to support parents' efforts. Secondly, there should be constant communication between school and home, which may exist through newsletters, e-mail messages, and conferences. The author states that these two-way communication strategies promote an open door policy. Volunteerism is another method by which schools can recruit parents to participate in the school program. Parents will be afforded the opportunity to market the school program

because they will have spent time in the school and will know the strengths of the school (pp. 33-34). Dietz and Whaley (1997) suggested that parents be involved in the governance of the school. Parents should have input into what impacts their children, such as giving their opinions on programs that are up for adoption or explaining their concerns with new school policies. Finally, collaboration with the community is another positive suggestion. School leaders need to identify community resources that are conducive to the goals of the school. Businesses are available to offer financial support to the school program in the form of purchasing supplies, sponsoring students for trips, and contributing money to the overall operation of the school.

Christenson and Sheridan (2001) identified actions that build shared responsibilities: creating family school teams, increasing problem-solving opportunities, and identifying and managing conflict. Advisory councils are formed to include parents in all aspects of the school and these primarily consist of teachers and parents. As parents and teachers work together on committees and set goals for students, conflicts sometimes arise. Christenson and Sheridan suggested that those individuals involved in committees acknowledge the possibility of conflicts arising and predetermine how issues will be solved. It is suggested that mediators get involved when there seems to be no solution to a problem. The key to having positive interactions lies within prior planning in solving problems.

Warner and Curry (1997) noted what they consider components of quality programs. For example, parents' interests are taken into consideration when deciding a course of action. Goals are set and objectives are identified for the program. There is continuous recruitment of individuals to join the partnership, and, organizations celebrate achievements. There is regular evaluation of the program for its effectiveness. Cultural diversity is celebrated as a strength.

Batey (1996) proposed a five-step plan of action in order to get parents involved in their children's education. The first step is that parents research the meaning of service and understand it fully before becoming involved. The second plan of action is for parents to reduce their biases. Parents are to come to terms with their views of education and people through examining themselves. There should then be a focus on treating everyone equally and with a great deal of respect. Thirdly, there must be a total commitment to servanthood which is defined as being dedicated to helping others reach goals. Those wishing to serve must realize that there are numerous stakeholders in education, people who will benefit from parent-school interactions. The fourth guideline is the commitment to having legitimate concerns. The author suggests that parents make sure that concerns are true concerns before jumping to conclusions and creating friction in the relationship. Finally, it is suggested that there be an assessment of the school's needs. Parents should find areas where they are needed and fulfill the needs through finding out which areas schools mostly need volunteers. When these steps have been completed, Batey (1996) suggests that parents are then prepared to offer direct assistance to the school.

Parents are encouraged to assert themselves when initiating contact with schools (Shore, 1994). The author encourages parents to speak up when it comes to something impacting the education of their child. They will be ensuring that attention is given to their child and others, leaving educators less likely to exclude parents who are advocates for children.

Shepard and Rose (1995) propose empowerment as an example of a focus on parental involvement. The empowerment model focuses first and foremost on parents. The model is comprised of basic communication, home improvement, volunteering, and advocacy. Two-way communication between home and school is a component of the program and families engage in constant communication with schools. For the component of home improvement, parents utilize

their acquired skills in their homes. These skills may include disciplining strategies, role modeling for their children, or any other skill acquired through parenting classes. Furthermore, families can volunteer in a variety of areas to foster a stronger support of schools and as a result, they become advocates for their children.

Suggestions

There is a wealth of material on ways to get parents involved. Morrison (1995) encouraged schools to start with the right attitude and get to know families for who they are in order to meet their needs. It is suggested that parents and communities together operate the parental involvement program and that educators act as facilitators.

Parents can be involved in workshops, fairs, dinners, and family nights. Allen and Canton and Allen (1993) suggested that they chaperone trips and speak at events while Swap (1987) suggested that parents be invited to lunch, show and tell, and to Saturday workshops where fathers, for example, can share their skills with others. Swap further suggested that an array of activities be provided so that parents may choose how they want to be involved in schools.

Batey (1996) suggested parents become involved by tutoring children, assisting in areas of the school such as the library, putting up bulletin boards, and teaching workshops. I advocate creating a handbook for parents much like student handbooks. The handbook would serve as a valuable tool when parents need to know how and when to assist schools.

An at-home learning coaching would prepare parents in supporting academics. Gordon and Brievogel (1976) identified the parental role of being a teacher as the parent learning about the challenges of education through actually helping their children with academics. Through coaching, parents are provided with specific instructions on how to help at home. As a result of

their learning, they will be empowered to share all that they have learned with other parents.

Parents then are identified as ambassadors for the school program (Constantino, 2003) for they will be very helpful in helping other parents to realize the importance of involvement.

There are various suggestions for how school leaders can support the school program. According to Decker and Decker (2003), leaders are to set the stage for partnerships by working with the staff to make the necessary changes to enlist parental support rather than preventing it. Teachers should be rewarded when they have made positive steps towards involving parents. Constantino (2003) identified the leader as the person who can change attitudes and in the self-reflective process, leaders can evaluate the overall school atmosphere in order to correct any flaws that prevent parental support of schools. For example, school personnel are to reflect the attitudes that invite parents into the school and in any instance that this idea is not upheld at all times, administrators are to correct it. Administrators need to be approachable by all parents (Constantino, 2003). Christenson and Sheridan (2001) confirmed that schools must exhibit positive attitudes in order for parents to be responsive. The school should have welcome signs, maps available for parents of the school, and areas to receive parents. It is also suggested that there be a parent center in the school. As a result parents are welcomed into the school family and will feel successful in supporting the school program.

Benefits

The benefits of having parents involved include “better attendance, improved behavior, higher quality of education, and safe and disciplined learning environments” (Warner & Curry, 1997, p. 5). As a result of parental involvement, parents are more likely to vote for bond elections, act as advocates for children, and support the school when crises arise. As a result, the authors suggested that parents who support their children through graduation can positively

affect their children's livelihood since the earnings of a person who goes to college differs significantly from one who does not. Parents strongly predict how far children will excel.

Decker and Decker (2003) identified the following as benefits to parental involvement:

- Student achievement increases regardless of race or socioeconomic status.
- The more involvement takes place, the more students achieve.
- Students display more positive attitudes.
- Educators have higher expectations.
- Graduation rates are higher. (p. 56-57)

Swap (1987) identified parent advocates and experts as additional benefits of parental involvement programs. Parents are in a better position to ensure that education is fully supported when they have seen the benefits of home-school interactions. Schools can provide parents with the necessary knowledge to head workshops for other parents when they involve parents in schools. Swap (1993) found that parents could acquire resources for the school, enhance the curriculum with their knowledge of diversity and culture, and serve as a liaison between businesses and schools. Additionally, parents can be very helpful in acquiring equipment for the school such as computers and other technology.

Booth and Dunn (1996) found three resonating outcomes for parents who are involved. They learn ways to help educate their children, they are motivated to further their own education, and they gain a sense of hope for their children's future. Teacher outcomes ranged from increasing their knowledge of socio-cultural contexts to more effective classroom management.

Research

Several studies have been completed on parental involvement as it relates to student achievement (Banks, 2002; Batey, 1996; Dworetzky, 1993; Gay, 2000; Ladson-Billings, 2004;

Swap, 1993; Toppings, 1986; Wing, 1997). Much of the research has been completed around improving the number of parents involved and on the implementation of quality programs. There is a further need to examine past research to see how it will affect present and future initiatives to getting parents involved.

A study was completed using parents of nursery school-age children (Rathbone, 1997). The control group attended the nursery school one afternoon a week while the experimental group had no guidelines on how they were to participate in the school setting. The control group was afforded a step-by step process to assist parents in teaching. Rathbone found that the students whose parents were in the control group remarkably outperformed those in the experimental group on a Picture Vocabulary Test.

Hall and Orbutt (1975) found that Native American children did better on a curriculum centered on their heritage than did White children. The authors suggest that students perform better when the curriculum incorporates their heritage. The finding also suggests that educators cannot adequately create a curriculum centered on a culture without the support of people who are members of the culture.

In an earlier research project, a reading club was created for parents. Parents met to create reading materials designed to reinforce class work. Although parents and students enjoyed the experience, the research was inconclusive. The students' reading skills did not improve as a direct result of the program (Raim, 1980).

In 1981, a study was conducted to determine parent and teacher interactions. Toppings (1986) theorized that student achievement increased as a result of the program even though parents and teachers were not required to follow specific guidelines in regard to the amount of time they interacted. The author also presented another study that tested the progress of students

in a reading program that emphasized parental involvement (p. 233). The achievement of the students far exceeded what the researchers anticipated. They directly attributed the outcome to the parental involvement component in which parents took part in the development of the curriculum and tutoring as opposed to attending meetings. The studies differed based on the results of student achievement. When guidelines were set for parental involvement, the students far exceeded the researcher's expectations as opposed to when there were no guidelines set for involvement.

Dworetzky (1993) detailed research where the achievement of children in an orphanage in Paris differed; those children who were placed in middle-class families outperformed children who remained in the orphanage. This research was conducted to invalidate that genetics is a predictor of school success. Based on this research, it is important that educators realize the value of parents in assisting them with the education of children. Families are important in meeting the overall needs of students as well as providing a foundation for learning.

The Comer School Model and the Accelerated Schools Model have been identified as viable solutions to increasing parental involvement (Swap, 1993). The Comer Model has been implemented in 150 schools and Swap observed it being used in three schools. Characteristics of this model include parents being involved in the planning and management team, contributing to the curriculum, and participating in social and academic activities. In this model, parents assisted with developing plans for behavioral problems for the school and these parents submitted learning goals for their children. In one of the schools observed, parents were offered social activities such as breakfasts in order to provide interaction among parents. The Comer School Model resulted in an increase in students' reading and math scores. The Accelerated School Model was also implemented in economically poor schools. This approach focused on

accelerating the curriculum and students engaged in interdisciplinary activities as they learned. According to Swap, the instruction provided by teachers promoted active learning. Collaborative decision making among the administrators, teachers, and parents established a true increase in student learning.

Hughes et al. (1994a) completed research on a parent evaluation of a school program. The ongoing evaluation consisted of parents reporting on the effectiveness of their children's schools. The goal was to identify whether parents felt that schools were doing a good job through reporting on what the schools were doing well in addition to reporting when they felt the schools were not being efficient. For example, some parents reported that they were only notified through report cards that their children were behind academically. Overall, most parents felt that the schools were doing a good job and supported the school program. This information is crucial to changing teacher's perspectives about parents. Parents do have a great deal of faith in educators.

Batey (1996) detailed the action research of Project Plus ("Parents Lifting Up Students") that was created to research why students failed. Parents met together regularly to discuss why they felt their children were failing and participants received ideas on how to help their children with academics. Students eventually attended sessions to discuss why they felt they were failing. As a result, student achievement increased directly following the parents attending the study group and providing academic support for their children.

In the book *Innovations in Parental and Family Involvement* (Hughes et al., 1994b), information is presented on schools that were lacking or had no formal parental involvement program and as a result had created a successful program. Those of particular interest in this study are those that involve elementary schools.

Attenville Elementary in Harts, West Virginia, created a program to get parents to become a part of the educational program of the school. The students of the school were descendents of people who lived in the Appalachian Mountains. Their parents were from low socioeconomic standing and were employed in the coal industry. The school received a grant and was able to afford parents the opportunity to attend workshops and get instructional support through the parent centers. Satellite centers where students of the school could be tutored were available throughout the community. One unique characteristic was a welcome wagon that was used during the first days of school. Parent volunteers were in charge of welcoming new and old parents back to school. Parents in the school lead the planning, operation, and monitoring of the program. Hughes et al. (1994a) found three benefits of the program. First, teachers were more accepting of parental involvement. Second, the curriculum went through a metamorphosis. The curriculum that existed before the implementation now included parental recommendations. Parents shared with educators the goals they had for their children and these were included in the curriculum. Finally, parental attitudes were more positive and as a result they were more readily able to speak out concerning the school.

At the Hawthorne School in San Diego, California, the Families Together program was created by Art, Research, and Curriculum Associates (ARC). The main issue the school faced was inspiring Asian parents to be involved because they were very reserved during meetings and had poor attendance. One unique characteristic of this program was that they offered parents who did not speak English the opportunity to learn the language. The program consisted of a director, outreach coordinator, and instructional assistants. All of the key people spoke the language of the students in the school. Parents were provided with workshops on English as a Second Language, letters and flyers consistently went home, and summer activities, which

consisted of field trips and technology workshops, were conducted. Hughes et al. (1994a) found that there was a change in the attitudes and behaviors of teachers and parents. Parents were much more comfortable going to the school and participating in the whole school program and educators felt that their efforts were supported.

The Association for Community Organizations (ACORN) assisted in the creating of an alternative school, the Rockaway New School, in Rockaway, New York. The association knocked on the doors of the people in the community and enlisted parent support for the school. As the petitions were signed, parents and the association held regular meetings. They discussed their issues with education in addition to participating in reading workshops. As the participant's education grew, they formulated a list of what they wanted in an ideal school and then took the issue up with the superintendent of the school district. The superintendent suggested that Public School 183 house the alternative school and teachers who were seeking a change from their current positions would teach in the new school. The first official school year was 1992-1993. Parents had to apply for their children's places in the school and were expected to be active in the school program. Components of the school included 30 to 35 volunteers, parent meetings, and parents as decision makers. Some parents assumed teacher duties. The goal was for the school to have no more than 250 students. Hughes et al. (1994a) concluded that many parents were involved, parents believed that their voices had value, and there was an increase in students' academic success. As a result, the superintendent initiated the same program in the middle schools. One issue facing the program was that of the personnel who taught in the other part of P.S. 183. The personnel saw the alternative school as an inconvenience and they did not want to share their resources such as the copier with the New School. In another instance, the regular school personnel viewed the students of the New School as being at-risk for failure. It is

important that educators be aware that obstacles may arise as they institute change in their schools. As parental involvement programs begin to evolve, schools may be met with internal obstacles as those described in P.S. 183.

Lareau (2000) presented research in two schools that compared teachers' perceptions of parental involvement to that of the parents. Both groups felt that parental involvement was beneficial to student achievement. Educators in the two schools agreed fully on what they attributed to the lack of parental participation: parents did not hold education in a high regard. However, the results of the parent survey concluded that parents really did support education and that students needed an education if they were to succeed. The research answered numerous questions such as whether parents were involved and how parental involvement affected student achievement. The author found that one parent was not visible in the school but did help instill a value of reading in his/her child and created math problems to supplement homework. In another area, Lareau (2000) found that the retention of students was directly attributed to the non-participation of parents. Teachers retained students when they felt that parents were not supporting education efforts.

Summary

Chapter 2 presented the findings of a review of the literature concerning the study of quality parental involvement programs. The history of parental involvement was explored and reasons for a lack of parental involvement were presented. For instance, the traditional family becomes scarcer as the years pass. Families headed by single parents have more issues than the traditional families that have a father and a mother guiding the family. Race also plays a part in parental involvement. America's racial make up is diverse and so the many issues facing the races pose problems with getting parents involved. With this in mind, the chapter also presented

the current perspectives of theorists on parental involvement. Suggestions on how to handle the issues of parental involvement were described.

CHAPTER THREE

Methodology

Chapter three provides the methodology for the study. This chapter serves as a guide for the action research project. There was an examination of current parental involvement programs. Parents, teachers, and administrators participated in a series of surveys, interviews, and group discussions. This chapter also provides a step by step description process how the research was carried out. The methodology chapter is organized under the following headings: action research, research design, participants and settings, procedures, gathering of information, implementation, and evaluation.

Action Research

There is a direct need for quality parental involvement programs in our nation's schools. The history of parental involvement includes constant shifts between who is responsible for educating children. Research has shown overwhelmingly support for parents being involved in their children's educations (Dietz & Whaley, 1997; Dworetzky, 1993; Haar, 2002, and Lareau, 2000). Schools have a very important task of implementing and maintaining parental support, which can be achieved through the creation of a quality program. This study focused on presenting a quality program to a school that has no formal parental involvement program. The goal was to empower school personnel to formulate a program and partnerships with parents.

Reason and Bradbury (2001) suggested that there needs to be a more intense interchange between theory and practice. In order for true action research to take place, theory is not the only component of research-practice that must be implemented. Action research normally consists of observation, planning, implementation, and reflection. These components vary with theorists of action research, but these components are the basic underlying theme of action research. A

problem is identified with a setting and steps are taken to solve the problem within that setting. Kurt Lewin is a major pioneer of action research. Lewin is credited with the idea of conducting experiments within settings rather than within an outside source such as a laboratory (Reason & Bradbury (2001). Munford and Sanders (2003) argued that research does not customarily include the input of others where action research demands it. Action research includes participants in decision-making and where applicable. Participants can provide valuable information for action research that is sometimes overlooked with traditional research methodology.

Action research was completed in one school in order to truly make a contribution to the education of younger children. Research completed outside of the environment would be of minimal use because the persons directly affected by the lack of parental involvement and who need a quality model would not be able to contribute to research that is based on their specific needs. The subjects in the study shared their ideas and their specific needs with the researcher. The subjects and the researcher actively sought solutions to solve some of the problems the educators face with parental involvement.

Research Design

The research method used was evaluative. Programs were analyzed for components that were consistent with the information gained from the literature review. Initially, the goal was to create a parental involvement program and monitor its implementation in a school. Unfortunately, the creation of a quality program takes years according to Dietz and Whaley (1997). School personnel and parents would have to implement, assess, redefine their focus, and reassess periodically. This process would be ongoing if schools are to follow the model of Dietz and Whaley. The focus of this study was to provide teachers with the knowledge concerning

parental involvement and the elements of a quality program. This intervention focused on the first two steps of implementing a quality program as provided by the literature:

Step 1: Educate teachers and school personnel on quality programs.

Step 2: Present a quality program for review and compare to the current program.

Step 3: Plan a course of action for the parental involvement program.

Step 4: Implement the program and evaluate the program regularly.

Step 5: Identify the qualitative results of the home-school partnership.

The goal of the research is to address the first two steps by providing teachers, administrators, and school personnel with the literature concerning parental involvement. Participants were then presented with a quality program to use as a model for a future parental involvement program. The remaining steps would be completed as deemed necessary by the school.

Participants and Setting

Two elementary schools were identified as the focus of this study. The adults in the school along with parents participated in the study.

School A is a school that does not have a formal parental involvement program. It is located in Metro-Atlanta and serves a community that has a student body that is 83.7% Black, 0.1% White, 6.0% Hispanic, 8.2% Asian, and 2.0% multiracial (2004-2005 SACS Report). African Americans represent approximately 98% of the staff. The students who attend school have parents who are identified as members of the low socioeconomic status. The school's population is transient with many of the parents employed in the service sector.

School B is a school that has a formal parental involvement program. It is located in suburban Atlanta and serves a student body that is 44.6% Black, 47.6% White, 3.4% Hispanic,

1.4% Asian, and 2.7% multiracial. Whites represent 99% of the staff. The median household income for the area is \$27,559 (Chamber of Commerce Report, 2000-2001).

The two schools involved in this study were different in many ways. School A serves a population of approximately 600 students with no formal parental program while School B serves a population of approximately 1600 students and is able to afford its stakeholders a quality parental program. School B has a variety of financial resources available to it as opposed to School A, but this research will focus on resources that are available to both schools that are being used by one school and not the other: quality partnerships and quality activities.

Procedures

The procedures of this study included the use of surveys, interviews, focus groups, and an evaluation. Initially, surveys were used to gather information about the two schools' interactions with parents. These were completed by school personnel and parents (Appendixes 1 & 2). Then interviews were conducted with school administrators to determine their level of involvement when it came to parent-school interactions (Appendix 3). Participants in School A participated in a study group to determine the specific aspects of a quality program. A school model was then presented for review. An evaluation was completed by the personnel in the school identified as the main focus group (Appendix 4). Finally participants evaluated their knowledge on quality parental involvement programs.

Information Gathering

The information for this section of the study was gathered through the use of archival/historical data as well as through the use of surveys, interviews, and evaluations. The researcher collected information from the schools concerning activities that were offered to parents. Brochures, pamphlets, and articles were collected and reviewed where they were made

available to the researcher. Information concerning how activities were organized was gathered from the activities' organizers. The goal was to talk with educators and collect as much information about how parental involvement programs are being implemented.

The two schools were identified as areas of focus because when they were examined, it was hypothesized that they either met the qualifications for having a formal program or as not having a formal program. Both schools' parental involvement initiatives were observed by the researcher in detail.

The researcher determined that there was a need for School A to identify a formal program. The first step in accomplishing this goal was for the school personnel to understand the elements of a quality program. The personnel in the school were presented with the literature concerning parental involvement contained in the research. As the second focus of this group, members compared its current level of parental involvement to that of the identified model school. The evaluation completed by the study group determined the validity of providing teachers, administrators, and other personnel with the knowledge on quality programs.

Implementation

The research was implemented over the course of a month. It was implemented during a time when school personnel were preparing for the upcoming school year. Plans were being formulated to achieve School Improvement Plans. Participants determined the quality of their school parental involvement. Then they determined whether the information presented was sufficient in supporting them to develop a plan of action to further include parents.

Evaluation

This study was evaluated based on the responses of the focus group. The focus group determined whether the information presented was relevant to their initiatives of getting parents

involved and whether the information presented assisted the participants. The focus group's responses determined the effectiveness of the intervention. All factors, such as the number of participants and the receptiveness of participants in the focus group were taken into consideration when the study was evaluated by the researcher.

CHAPTER FOUR:

Analysis of Data

This chapter details the data collected on two school parental involvement programs. Each school participated in parent surveys, teacher surveys, and administrative interviews. Additionally, one school completed a program coordinator interview and the other school, which did not have an identified program, was involved in a focus group. The results are reported for each school based on the data collection tools used with that particular school.

Findings of School A

School A is located in metropolitan Atlanta and is comprised of approximately 600 students. This school was chosen for the study because of its lack of parental involvement. Data were collected in order to determine whether the school had the characteristics of a quality program and to identify its parental participation initiatives. This school would later be identified to participate in a focus group.

School A Parent Surveys

Parent surveys were distributed in two intervals with 81 participants returning the surveys. Students received the surveys one day and received treats if they brought back their forms the next day. Parents responded to the following questions by rating them in terms of strongly agreeing (5), agreeing (4), neither agreeing or disagreeing (3), disagreeing (2), and strongly disagreeing (1). The format below includes the number of participants who assigned a particular rating for the question.

Table 1

School A Parent Survey Results

Questions:	Ratings: 1 strongly disagree	2 dis- agree	3 neither agree nor disagree	4 agree	5 strongly agree
The school offers activities regularly for parents to participate in during the school year.	1 1%	7 9%	16 20%	32 39%	25 31%
My child's teachers are in regular communication with me.	5 6%	4 5%	14 17%	25 31%	33 41%
The faculty and staff at the school encourage parents to be involved.	2 3%	6 7%	14 17%	24 30%	35 43%
I am involved in activities at the school on a regular basis.	10 13%	16 20%	29 37%	16 20%	8 10%
I see an improvement in my child's work as a result of my involvement.	3 4%	4 5%	18 23%	20 26%	33 42%

The survey participants also gave further details about the school and the responses are noted below:

Question: What are some of the activities provided for parents?

- Lunch and Learns
- Student Support Team Meetings/Conferences
- Bank Days (parents deposit money into the accounts of students)
- Spring Fling
- Standardized Testing workshops
- School Dances
- Skate Parties
- Family Fun Nights
- Parent Nights (parents receive instruction on how students are being educated)
- Parent Teacher Association meetings

- Open House
- School-wide Fundraisers
- Volunteer opportunities (in classrooms/other areas of the building and fieldtrips)

Question: If you are a part of a minority race, what kinds of activities are provided for your culture?

- Black History Program
- English as a Second Language Learners (ELL) program-students who speak other languages are afforded an opportunity to attend classes to learn the English language

Question: List reasons why you may not be as involved in the school program.

- Being a single parent
- Not available/time of the event
- Commitments to other children (disabilities/newborns)
- Sick/Disabled
- Work a lot
- Little to no contact prior to scheduled events/Unaware of programs
- Language barriers
- No transportation
- Teachers discourage parents/parents only called when things are going wrong
- Inappropriate music at events such as the skating rink and dances

School A Teacher Surveys

Teacher surveys were also collected for School A in two intervals with twenty participants returning their surveys. The first set of surveys were placed in teacher's mailboxes along with consent forms. As teachers turned in their surveys, they witnessed their consent forms and surveys being immediately separated and randomly placed in stacks during a faculty meeting. The second set was collected as people completed them outside of the time frame of the initial distribution. Participants of the survey answered questions with the same rating scale as parents: (5) being strongly to (1) being strongly disagree.

Table 2

School A Teacher Survey Results

Questions:	Ratings: 1 strongly disagree	2 disagree	3 neither agree nor disagree	4 agree	five strongly Agree
My school has an established parental involvement program. (i.e. coordinator and/or committee)	2 10.5%	4 21%	3 16%	8 42%	2 10.5%
My school provides sufficient opportunities for parents to be involved.	0 0%	4 20%	0 0%	10 50%	6 30%
The administration and teachers in my school welcome parents into the school.	0 0%	0 0%	2 10%	11 55%	7 35%
My school has identified periods of time for parent-teacher conferences.	3 15%	3 15%	5 25%	8 40%	1 5%
The school mandates parent-teacher communication.	0 0%	1 5%	5 25%	9 45%	5 25%
The administration of my school follows up on parent-teacher communication.	2 10%	3 15%	10 50%	5 25%	0 0%
I am aware of the issues facing some parents that prevent them from being involved.	0 0%	1 5%	4 20%	10 50%	5 25%

The participants also answered questions to identify activities being offered to parents and their thoughts on why parents are not as involved.

Question: List the activities that parents are involved in while visiting the school:

- After school clubs
- Having lunch with their children
- Attending assemblies
- Chaperoning field trips
- Attending “Make-It, Take-It” workshops (make games to take home)
- Joining the Parent Teacher Organization (PTO/PTA)
- Supporting Male Connections (mentoring program)
- Attending parent-teacher conferences
- Assisting with school-wide fundraising projects
- Attending Parent Nights (parents learn about ways to help students)
- Mentoring students
- Volunteering in classrooms/other areas of the building
- Attending award ceremonies

Question: List activities designed specifically to involve minority groups:

- Sisters of Unity and Leadership (S.O.U.L/mentoring organization for girls)
- Black History program
- Male Connection
- Cinco De Mayo Celebration (Hispanic heritage activity)

Question: In your opinion what are some of the possible reasons why parents are not involved?

- Work schedules
- Commitment is low
- Lack of parenting skills/parents do not understand their roles

- Negative school experiences
- Hands-off approach
- Lethargic
- Apathetic
- Single parent homes
- No transportation
- No child care
- Health issues
- Not interested
- Language barriers
- Low self-concept
- No established program at School A
- No notice/short notice
- Low teacher motivation to motivate parents
- No time (parents work far from home)
- No phone
- Weak Parent Teacher Association (PTA)
- Personal issues
- Addictions

School A Administrative Interview

An interview was conducted with the assistant principal of the school due to the retirement of the school's principal. The assistant principal met with the researcher to provide further insight into the school's parental involvement program. The assistant principal

interviewed had 18 years of experience in education with 4 of those years serving in the capacity of Assistant Principal. The questions asked during the interview are noted below along with the answers.

Question: What roles do parents play in the school? In your opinion, why are they involved in some areas and not others?

Parents tend to stick to their role, which is the role of parent. Some parents are not involved because they believe it is the teacher's role to teach. It is ideal for parents to be involved in all aspects of the school in order to reinforce the goals of the school. The Parent Teacher Association is an outlet for parents to become involved. Economics does play a role in whether or not parents are involved. Many parents focus on providing the basics (shelter, clothing, and food) for their students and do not have time to come to school and volunteer.

Question: What are some of the views expressed by your faculty concerning parental involvement? What do you think attributes to these views?

The teachers of the school want to know why parents are not involved. Teachers feel it is not their responsibility to teach morals and values. Many believe in 1 year's growth for the students with or without parent support. Some teachers base parental involvement on their own school experiences; whether or not their own parents were involved in their education reflects in their beliefs of parental involvement in their classrooms. Some teachers expect parental involvement while others do not complain.

Question: What qualities do you think are components of a quality program? Do you feel that your school has a quality parental involvement program?

School A could be so much better in its efforts to get parents involved. Parents are not expected to be involved and many teachers accept this by making no effort to get the

involvement needed. If the school would set reachable and obtainable goals for parents, then parents could rise to the occasion. If there is a great deal of consistency with getting parents involved then this would bring about great change in the level of parent participation in the school.

Question: How are parents involved in the governance of the school?

Parents are involved in the school councils more than in any other form. Parent teacher association meeting attendance would allow for more information to go out concerning what things are impacting the school but unfortunately few parents attend.

Question: What is the school system doing to ensure the implementation of the parent involvement clause of No Child Left Behind?

The school has put some things in place to get parents involved but everyone is not adhering to the focus of getting parents involved. The principal impacts the implementation of parental involvement initiatives. It is a hard task to get parents involved and to keep them involved consistently. However, if expectations are set high and follow through is done, then parents will be involved.

Reflections on School A

The completion of the parent surveys, teacher surveys, and the administrative interview went very well. Participants returned surveys and the majority of the surveys were filled out completely with only one or two missing the ratings assigned for questions. The information collected was very valuable for this research.

Parent and teacher surveys revealed information concerning programs and reasons why parents are not as involved. Parents seemed to be aware of the many programs offered at school but many participants disagreed that they were regularly involved in the activities of the school

(see table 1, question 4). The teacher surveys revealed that they lacked pertinent knowledge about quality programs because the responses revealed that the participants were divided on whether or not the school had a formal program (see table 2, question 1). The administrative interview confirmed that the school has work to do in order to identify itself as having a quality program.

In examining both groups' surveys, it was noted that they agreed on some of reasons as to why parents are not involved such as transportation, unawareness of programs, single parents, and language barriers. However, there were some other unique explanations provided. Some parents reported feeling as though teachers discouraged parents. One parent reported that there was inappropriate music at events. Teachers consistently reported that parents do not adequately understand their roles in being involved in their child's education and that many choose to take a hands-off approach. It would be very valuable for these two groups to see their similarities and differences in what they report as reasons why parents are not involved. This type of examination will open many parents' and teachers' eyes to what they can do to improve parental involvement.

Furthermore, surveys of both groups revealed that there are very few programs offered specifically for minorities. In the multicultural society that we live in, schools need to be sure to celebrate the differences found in classrooms. These programs should not only cater to Blacks (Black History Month) and Hispanics (Cinco de Mayo), which are the groups often referred to as minorities, but activities should also be geared towards other minority groups whether the group is present in the school or not. It is ideal to expose students to as many cultures as possible.

In conclusion, School A offers activities for parents to be involved, yet there is no connectedness or consistency with the activities offered. It lacks a formal program and in order

to make gains in the area of parent participation, it will need to thoroughly examine its current practices and research ways to improve.

Findings School B

School B is comprised of approximately 1,600 students. It is located in suburban Atlanta. The school was included in this study in order to showcase a school that has a quality parental involvement program. The research tools used to analyze the school program were parent surveys, teacher surveys, administrative interview, and program coordinator interview. The data collected are provided below.

School B Parent Surveys

There were 24 parents returning surveys for the study. The parent surveys were sent home right before school closed for the year and again during summer school. Parents responded to the following questions by rating them in terms of strongly agreeing (5), agreeing (4), neither agreeing or disagreeing (3), disagree (2), and strongly disagreeing (1). The format below includes the number of participants giving a particular rating for the questions.

Table 3

School B Parent Survey Results

Questions:	Ratings: 1 strongly disagree	2 dis- agree	3 neither agree nor disagree	4 agree	5 strongly Agree
The school offers activities regularly for parents to participate in during the school year.	0 0%	1 4%	5 21%	4 17%	14 58%
My child's teachers are in regular communication with me.	0 0%	3 12.5%	1 4%	3 12.5%	17 71%
The faculty and staff at the school encourage parents to be involved.	0 0%	0 0%	6 25%	2 8%	16 67%
I am involved in activities at the school on a regular basis.	2 8%	3 13%	0 0%	8 33%	11 46%
I see an improvement in my child's work as a result of my involvement.	0 0%	1 4%	2 8%	6 25%	15 63%

The survey participants were also given further information about parental involvement.

The answers recorded are provided below.

Question: What are some of the activities provided for parents?

- HOSTS (Helping One Student To Succeed) Tutorial/Mentor Program
- PTVO (Parent Teacher Volunteer Organization)
- Volunteering (Special Events or in areas of the school)
- Lunch with their child
- Field Trips
- Daddy Days
- Parties
- Room Parent (assists teacher during special events)
- Tutoring students
- Fundraising
- Parent-Teacher conferences
- Teacher Appreciation Week Events
- Mother's Day Tea
- Book Fair
- Drug Free Activities

Question: If you are a part of a minority race, what kinds of activities are provided for you culture?

- Black History Education
- Home Visits

Question: List reasons why you may not be as involved in the school program.

- Work
- Timing/Schedule
- Single parent
- Illness
- Transportation
- Personal Education
- PTVO boring, sells objectionable items such as sodas and Christmas things
- Childcare
- Uninformed about ways to help children in upper elementary grades.

School B Teacher Surveys

Teacher surveys were also collected for School B in two intervals with 23 participants returning their surveys. The first set of surveys were given to teachers during a faculty meeting and then again during summer school. Participants of the survey answered questions with the same rating scale as parents: (1) strongly disagree to (5) strongly agree. The number of participants assigning a rating for the questions is provided in the table.

Table 4

School B Teacher Survey Results

Questions:	Ratings: 1 strongly disagree	2 dis- agree	3 neither agree nor disagree	4 agree	5 strongly Agree
My school has an established parental involvement program . (i.e. coordinator and/or committee)	0 0%	1 4.3%	0 0%	4 17.4%	18 78.3%
My school provides sufficient opportunities for parents to be involved.	0 0%	1 4%	0 0%	3 13%	19 83%
The administration and teachers in my school welcome parents into the school.	0 0%	1 4%	0 0%	2 9%	20 87%
My school has identified periods of time for parent-teacher conferences.	0 0%	1 4%	0 0%	0 0%	22 96%
The school mandates parent-teacher communication.	0 0%	0 0%	0 0%	4 18%	18 82%
The administration of my school follows up on parent-teacher communication.	0 0%	0 0%	2 9%	10 48%	9 43%
I am aware of the issues facing some parents that prevent them from being involved.	2 9%	0 0%	1 4%	4 17%	16 70%

The participants of the teacher surveys went further to answer the following questions:

Question: List the activities that parents are involved in while visiting the school:

- Evening Parent Activities/Science Nights
- DOGS (Dads of Great Students)
- Volunteers
- PTVO
- Field-trips
- Fundraisers
- HOST
- Mother's Day Tea
- Grade Level Activities

- Tutoring
- Having lunch with student
- Parties
- Room mother

Question: List activities designed specifically to involve minority groups:

- Night sessions on parenting
- ESOL/ELL
- HOSTS
- Parent education resource center
- Pamphlets in English and Spanish
- Parenting and homework skills

Question: In your opinion what are some of the possible reasons why parents are not involved.

- Overwhelmed with maintaining skills taught at school via homework
- Time
- Work
- Transportation
- Childcare
- Previous school experiences/fear
- Lack of concern
- Education levels/don't know what to do
- Language barriers

School B Administrative Interview

The administrator of School B was interviewed in order to provide further insight into the direction of the parental involvement program. The educator has many years of experience with teaching children and as an administrator. She has been an administrator in schools with 500 students to schools that have approximately 1,600 students. Listed below are the questions and the answers that resulted from this interview.

Question: What roles do parents play in the school? In your opinion, why are they involved in some areas and not others?

Parents have many roles in the school. Currently, they serve as tutors, classroom moms, strong supporters of the instructional program, raising funds, and liaisons between school and community. Parents act as public relations representatives in that they solicit community support for the school program. The educator reported that parental involvement is an economic issue rather than a race issue. Parents who come from a middle class background have more flexibility with their jobs and can afford to come to school. Parents who work in factories do not have a great deal of flexibility and cannot afford to come to school as often as they would like. However, the educator warns that it is imperative that everyone understands that even those parents who come from a low socioeconomic class want to be involved and want the best for their children.

Question: What are some of the views expressed by your faculty concerning parental involvement? What do you think attributes to these views?

The faculty understands that having parents involved will help the children. However, having organized activities for parents when they come to school requires a great deal

of effort and time on the teacher's part. Educators must work extra hard to ensure that the program is run successfully.

Question: What qualities do you think are components of a quality program? Do you feel that your school has a quality parental involvement program?

The educator stated that quality programs included all parents by making them feel loved and valued. It was stated that there needed to be a variety of jobs available that would allow parents to participate in an area that interested them. Furthermore, quality programs treat parents in a kind way. Schools make every effort to ensure that parents know they are appreciated. The educator identified her school as having a quality program. The educator does feel that there needs to be an even closer relationship between the staff and those heading the parental involvement program. It was suggested that a closer relationship among the staff and those heading the program will allow for the program to be more structured.

Question: How are parents involved in the governance of the school?

Parents are involved through the school council. It is comprised of parents and the community working with school personnel to exchange ideas on how to better improve schools. The focus is to understand the various perspectives that exist on how schools are doing. The council directly examines teacher effectiveness as well as administrative effectiveness.

Question: What is the school system doing to ensure the implementation of the parental involvement clause of No Child Left Behind?

The school has a policy for parental involvement and the parents receive a copy of this policy.

School B Program Coordinator Interview

The coordinator of the school parental involvement program was interviewed to identify her role in getting parents involved. It was the goal of this interview to determine even further what the school is doing to maintain parental participation in the education program. The notes are as follows:

Question: What is your identified role as coordinator of the parental involvement program?

The coordinator's role is that of President of the Parent Teacher Volunteer Organization (PTVO). This job entails the coordinator organizing and overseeing the programs executed under the organization. The coordinator also assists with the development of program initiatives to get parents involved.

Question: Do you have a committee? Who comprises this committee? What are the jobs of those members of the committee?

The program coordinator is assisted by a vice president (heads fundraising projects), two membership drive chairs, a secretary, and grade level representatives. Committees are established within PTVO and these include a parent committee and a teacher committee. The parent committee meets once a month to brainstorm ideas on how to get parents involved. The teacher committee consists of grade-level representatives who meet with the organization and take the information back to other teachers. The teacher committee is then encouraged to get information from teachers on what is working and what is not working with the organization.

Question: What kinds of activities are offered to parents? Are there specific activities designed to support minority parents in supporting their children's educations?

The programs offered to parents include: Trojan Dogs (45 Dads getting involved in their child's education who are featured on the morning broadcast), an opportunity to join PTVO,

volunteering in classrooms and in other areas of the building, and participating in fundraising initiatives. Additionally, the community is involved through the HOST (Helping One Student at a Time) program and the 12 university students assist the organization by tutoring students.

Question: How often is information disbursed to parents concerning the program or parental involvement?

Parents are informed on a weekly basis of the PTVO's aim through newsletters and/or monthly special events flyers. The organization sends out financial information to the parents every 6 weeks informing parents on the account balance and budgets for specific programs.

Question: Does your program disburse evaluation tools to parents to rate the effectiveness of the program? If so, how often and what seems to be the overwhelming response of parents?

Each year, surveys go home to parents to rate the program and many surveys are returned revealing that parents feel that the program is successful. However, some parents have reported concerns with the many fundraising projects. Two open forums are held each year in order for parents to meet with the PTVO committee and express their concerns. The coordinator continues to inform parents that education budget cuts cause budget cuts in special programs and therefore, it is a necessary for the PTVO to rely on fundraisers to support activities.

Question: What are the future endeavors of this organization to get parents involved?

The PTVO committees plan to continue to open the organization to all parents and endeavor to communicate even better with parents. The organization also wants to create even more ways to assist parents with helping their children at home.

In addition to all that the PTVO organization is doing to get parents involved, the coordinator provided information as to other ways the organization is making strides with parent and teacher involvement:

- Volunteers log their hours using a special computer in the front lobby.
- Volunteer logs reveal that parents volunteer more than a thousand hours in a year's time.
- Luncheons are provided for teachers because teachers must be motivated as well.
- PTVO presents teachers with lunch and gifts during Teacher Appreciation Week.
- Every teacher in the school, including art, music, and physical education teachers, receives \$200 dollars to use for their classrooms each year.
- PTVO provides funds for school materials, such as extra shelving in the media center, for which there would otherwise be no funding.
- The organization financially supports Project Smiles, which provides winter coats for needy students.
- Money is set aside each year to sponsor children who will be attending the 5th grade good behavior trip.

Reflections on School B

School B provided some valuable information on parental involvement. The school has an established program and the program is very active in getting parents and teachers involved. The school provides many avenues for parents to be involved through volunteering in the school and assisting with raising money for activities.

The school did not return as many parent and teacher surveys as was expected. The primary reason for the lack of participation was due to the fact that parents and teachers were surveyed during the last weeks of school, which is one of the busiest times of the year. However, parents and teachers filled out their forms in their entirety and a wealth of information was gathered through the interviews of the principal and program coordinator.

In reviewing the parent and teacher surveys it was noted that both groups consistently agreed that the PTVO was an established program and that it is doing a good job of getting parents involved. Parents were clearly aware of all the programs offered. However, there was a lack of programs to specifically include minorities. This school is comprised of many minority groups. Furthermore, the teacher surveys revealed that they are aware of the many reasons why parents are not as involved. Many of these reasons, such as transportation and job requirements, paralleled those supplied by parents.

The administrative interview revealed that the principal has as a focus to make the program even more successful. She confirmed the information reported on the parent and teachers surveys. For example, this school leader clearly understands that parental involvement is an economic issue; parents must work in order to be able to provide for their children and those parents who are of a lower socioeconomic class cannot always leave their jobs to come to schools.

The program coordinator interview gave valuable insight as to the requirements of her job title. She is both an organizer of activities and follows through with the implementation of activities. The program seems to be making great strides with getting parents involved through the offering of many activities. Parents are able to choose the area in which they would like to volunteer.

Implementation and Evaluation

During post planning, the researcher met with 13 educators to discuss parental involvement. This group included special education teachers, a literacy coach, music teacher, early intervention program teachers, and grade level teachers. The goal of the meeting was to assist School A with establishing a parental involvement program.

The educators were very eager to discuss and provide their thoughts on parental involvement. The entire focus group agreed that there were schools that have established parental involvement programs complete with coordinators and committees. The researcher explained further what the requirements were for schools to have formal programs and the consensus of the group was that their school lacked the characteristics. The group reported that support from administrators, teachers, and the community is needed in order to create a quality parental involvement program. In schools that have formal parental involvement programs, it was agreed that these schools have high number of parents attending functions, parents observe in classrooms, parents consistently seek to do more for their children and the school, children value education, and the school has minimal behavior problems. The educators unanimously agreed that it is important for parents to be involved in the governance of the school.

The group was presented with the information detailed in the No Child Left Behind Act that mandates parental involvement in schools. The group was able to identify how school councils and school choice pertained to the act, but many of the focus group participants were not aware that schools were mandated to have established parental involvement programs. A member of the focus group quickly held the county system responsible for not sharing this information. Moreover, one educator voiced her concern with holding public schools to such high standards when public school parental involvement will differ greatly from private school parental involvement. She felt that the president was setting too high of a standard due to all of the issues public schools are faced with when it comes to teaching public school children. These issues include broken homes and escalating poverty levels. However, the teachers were able to identify ways to get parents involved such as providing academic workshops, tutoring opportunities, an open door policy where parents feel welcome in the school, and by providing

various methods of communicating with parents. It was stated that communication can be done through the disbursing of newsletters on a regular basis, holding school conferences, and discussing student achievement with parents through telephone conferences when they are not available to come to school.

The educators were provided an opportunity to make some general comments about parental involvement. One educator stated that on a scale of 1 to 10, the school was a 3 in regards to getting parents involved and also stated that the school has much work to do in publicizing parental involvement. Another educator commented that parents have a very difficult time understanding their importance in their children's education and that it is up to the school to educate them about their roles. One educator felt that the PTA needed to do a better job of communicating with teachers and parents. It was also suggested that it is imperative for the school to find parents who are excited about parental involvement and to let them be the driving force in getting other parents involved. While several educators informed the focus group that they were having a hard time with parental involvement, others in the group were having good parental involvement in their individual classrooms. It is this type of exchange that will improve parental involvement because educators can share with each other what they are doing to involve parents.

Some major points of the review of literature were shared with the focus group. For example, parents inherently want what is best for their children, the physical environment of the school plays a major role in welcoming parents, attitudes impact relationships, parents need a variety of workshops that are created based on their needs, and that a parental involvement program must be planned, experimented with, revised, assessed, and tried again. Additionally, the group also received information on the reasons for a lack of involvement such as the quality

of relationships, inappropriate assignments and feedback, and parents feeling as though they are not valued. The group was also provided with the information obtained from School B, which has a formalized program. For example, the parent teacher association is a part of the parental involvement program and not the program itself. A committee organizes and implements activities instead of offering a series of involvement activities that are not connected. In addition, the school has a volunteer room and parents are coached on how to volunteer rather than assuming they know exactly what to do; volunteers are recognized yearly. The administration also mandates parent and teacher conferences twice a year (students are released early on conference days).

In working with the focus group, the next step was to identify ways that School A could make strides in getting parents involved. The comments of the focus group were:

- Attitudes of teachers must change/no longer accept the idea that “some” parents just are not going to be involved.
- Sell parents on the idea of involvement on a consistent basis such as during Student Support Team (SST) meetings, when they drop off their children, or when they come for special programs.
- Start with the parents and survey them to determine their needs and their goals for a parental involvement program.
- Do not expect parents to come to school all the time/accept the fact that they will come in when a particular activity interests them.
- Hold the first PTA meeting as close to the beginning of school as possible.
- Keep in touch with parents during the summer.
- Parent and teachers must share their goals with each other.

- Initiate a more welcoming environment for all who enter the school.
- Outline to parents, monthly, what is being taught and coach parents on how to teach their children.

At the conclusion of the session, the educators seemed to be really excited about moving the school in the right direction. They completed an evaluation of the session, responses were tallied, and the results are provided in the form of how many educators chose a specific rating for the question. The ratings are: 5 (Strongly Agree), 4 (Agree), 3 (Neither agree/disagree), 2 (Disagree), and 1 (Strongly Disagree).

Table 5

School A Focus Group Results

Questions:	Ratings: 1 strongly disagree	2 dis-agree	3 neither agree nor disagree	4 agree	5 strongly Agree
Knowledge was presented that will assist me in supporting parental involvement initiatives.	0 0%	0 0%	0 0%	7 54%	6 46%
My questions about parental involvement were answered	0 0%	0 0%	1 8%	7 54%	5 38%
I am motivated to establish an identified program for my school	0 0%	0 0%	0 0%	5 38%	8 62%
Overall, the focus group was effective in equipping me with the knowledge on parental involvement	0 0%	0 0%	0 0%	4 31%	9 69%

Participants responded to the following questions:

Question: What information obtained through the focus group are you more likely to share with your colleagues?

- Ideas on how to get parents involved.
- The No Child Left Behind information/the legal obligation to have an organized parental involvement program.

- Parent feelings about education.
- Call parents regularly.
- Encourage administration to get an established parental involvement program.
- Teacher involvement is important.
- Reiterate to veteran teachers the importance of parental involvement and that all parents can be involved if encouraged.
- Information on how to implement a quality program.

Question: Please provide information that will improve future focus groups on parental involvement.

- More meetings.
- Bring ideas for short term goals.
- Meet with parents.
- Implement a program now with parents, teachers, and the administration providing input.
- Provide written outlines of the information provided in the focus groups.
- Provide parental involvement information to new teachers.
- Give focus questions in advance so that educators may brainstorm prior to meeting with the group.
- Larger meeting place.

Chapter Reflection and Summary

Many research tools were used in this study to collect as much information about parental involvement as possible. The goal was to gather as much data as possible to determine whether or not schools had a formalized parental involvement program. Once a determination was made

as to which school met the requirements for having a program, this school was showcased, along with other information on parental involvement, to the school lacking a formal program.

The data collected on School A and School B supported the original observation that School A lacked a formal program while School B had an established program. The teacher surveys for School A represented a division among the teachers as to whether the school had an established program or not; 10 educators reported the school as having an established program, while 6 disagreed to some extent, and 3 educators neither agreed nor disagreed. The data supported this school as needing to establish a formal program. On the other hand, School B's teachers voted 22 to 1 that the school had a formal parental involvement program. The goal then was to collect information on the parental involvement initiatives on both schools and supplement School A's list with that of School B.

A wealth of information was collected on the types of activities offered to parents at both schools. Many activities overlapped, such as volunteering and after school activities such as parent nights while there were some identified major gaps in what School B was doing in comparison to School A. School B had formal activities that were implemented on a consistent basis to obtain and maintain parental involvement such as the HOSTS and Trojan Dogs programs. Parents and the community committed to coming to school and helping children on a regular basis. When parents are required to commit to a particular activity they are more likely to come to the school.

The intervention piece of this research entailed working with School A in identifying a quality parental involvement program and arming them with the knowledge needed to establish a formal plan to get parents involved. The group was both enthusiastic about discussing parental involvement as it pertained to their school and offered a wealth of ideas as to how to get parents

involved in addition to those supplied by the researcher. The data collected through the use of an evaluation tool suggests that the intervention was successful due to the participants reporting that they agreed or strongly agreed with the majority of questions asked.

In completing this project, initially the researcher was a bit overwhelmed. There were so many angles that could be taken to complete the project. One angle was to go from an educator perspective only on the project but that would neglect the parental input. Another angle would totally focus on the parents but would neglect the educator input. It was decided to include both aspects for a successful project. It was determined that both parents and educators had a wealth of knowledge to share about parental involvement.

The knowledge gained from completing a study such as this was enormous. Valuable information was collected that could be utilized by other schools in assisting the schools with establishing a parental involvement program. Oftentimes ideas are conceived but there is little to no research done on the topic prior to implementing a program. This study was conducted to change the thoughts on what parental involvement is and how to get parents to commit to being involved. I reported that the success of this study relied heavily on my inquisitive nature and the thoroughness of collecting the information needed for the study. It has been determined that due to the researching of parental involvement that my own biases towards the topic have been eliminated. For example, involvement by parents can come in any form either through maintaining academic skills at home and rarely physically showing up at the school to parents being seen at the school on a consistent basis and not contributing to the quality of education their child receives. It is imperative that educators realize that not everything we view as parental involvement is actually conducive to the education of children and that just because we do not see a parent does not mean they are not involved. Parents are involved in a variety of

ways and it is my goal to arm schools and educators with the information obtained from a review of the literature, the in-depth study of two schools, and the results of the focus group session that was geared to assisting the group with planning a parental agenda and program.

The journey completed in studying parental involvement has been eye opening. Anyone wishing to take such a journey will be challenged to determine what is useful information and what is not. It will be imperative for a researcher to trust the process and in the end, quality information will be obtained in order to improve parental involvement.

CHAPTER FIVE

Conclusions and Implications

This chapter is organized to address the conclusions of the research study, as well as to identify ways to improve theory and practice in education. The major findings of this study are included in the conclusions portion of the study. The theory and practice portion of the chapter includes recommendations for this study and future studies in addition to the recommendations for each school.

Conclusions

A focus group was conducted with a school that lacked a formal program for parental involvement. The group was presented with information on how other schools get parents involved and the group evaluated the effectiveness of the information presented. This study found that when educators were armed with the information necessary to plan and implement parental involvement programs, they were more likely to be motivated to establish such a program. The participants of the focus group found the information shared with them to be meaningful and a motivator to establish a program at their school.

A major strength of this study is that it approached obtaining information on parental involvement at every angle from a parent's perspective to an educator's perspective. It is this diligence that made the researcher successful in supplying relevant information on parental involvement to educators at a school that lacked a program. As a result educators were motivated to establish a program.

There were some weaknesses with this study. The major weakness is that it did not motivate more educators in more schools to establish programs. This study was focused on establishing a program at one school and neglected to impact numerous schools. In order to

make great gains in parental involvement research needs to impact as many educators and parents as possible. Furthermore, this study did not include completing a focus group session with parents to arm them with research on parental involvement and to inform them on what schools should be doing to get them involved. A parent component in the form of an information session would provide a more in-depth view of what parental participation programs should deem as their foci.

It was learned, through this study that there is a wealth of information available to educators on parental involvement and it should be their focus to get parents involved so that students are given the best chance at being successful. Both I and those involved in the study group were made aware of this fact during the completion of this study. Furthermore, there are many strategies that can be used to get parents involved that will benefit both children and adults such as parent nights. Through the organization of parent nights, parents can learn information that is relevant to them being a parent and learn valuable ways to assist with the maintenance of skills taught at school.

As future researchers attempt to complete studies on parental involvement, this study will be used as a guide for some researchers or as a means of collecting information on how parents are involved in their children's academic lives. The information obtained in the methodology section will aid action researchers in completing this same study or a similar one. The results of the parent and teacher surveys can reveal the numerous ways parents are involved. The administrative interviews can provide the viewpoints of administrators on how their schools are doing with getting parents involved. The information obtained from interviewing a program coordinator can be used as a means of arming a newly established parental involvement program coordinator with the necessary elements of their job title. The focus group portion can clearly

identify teacher perceptions, initiate change in these perceptions if necessary, and provide a means of evaluating the research initiative. The findings of this study are sure to impact the education of children for years to come due to the many parents and educators who took part in the study.

Theory and Practice

In order for education to be enhanced by this study, it is imperative that recommendations are made not only for this study and future studies, but it is also important to make recommendations for each school involved in the study. Future studies will need to make some changes in order to overcome the limitations of this study. By making recommendations for each school, it will allow for schools to improve their programs so that there may be a wide range of improvement in parental involvement.

The first recommendation to be made is for researchers to do an even more thorough job of reviewing the literature. Initially I assumed that there was not a lot of literature on parental involvement; however, this was untrue. The amount of literature on the subject was overwhelming. Nevertheless, it is important for researchers to examine as much of the research as possible and help provide it to teachers. It is also important to choose literature that is relevant to the area of focus. There is literature that caters to the parental involvement of children at different school levels such as elementary, middle school, high school, and college levels. Furthermore, it is suggested that even more literature on race and parental involvement is reviewed in order to ensure a broader perspective on how authors view race as it pertains to parental involvement. There are some authors who report that race has nothing to do with parental involvement while others report that it has everything to do with parental involvement.

If it is another researcher's goal to address this issue, then the study should examine more relevant literature to substantiate the focus of his study.

The second recommendation to be made, for those who wish to do a similar study, is that the collection of data should be done very early on in the school year. This study was completed at the end of the year and yielded only a few surveys in one school. At the end of the year teachers are worn out and have many tasks that need to be completed in order to successfully bring the school year to a close. Another option is that the collection of data can be done during school functions where parents are in attendance which eliminates the need for teachers to handle research instruments. The researcher must be available to visit a school more often in order to collect even more data. Teachers would then not have to keep up with the surveys or be tempted to view the responses of parents in their rooms.

There is a need to make some adjustments to the survey tools. It is suggested that the parental survey tools are labeled so that only one survey is to be filled out per home. This will eliminate the need to throw away duplicate surveys because some parents did not question filling out a second form. Moreover, parents should be afforded the opportunity on their surveys to make suggestions on how to better achieve parental participation as well as provide information as to what types of activities they deem important. Another recommendation is that the rating of the questions on the survey be given in descending order. This descending order would be consistent with the order the ratings are given in the directions.

In the event that a researcher wishes to complete only one angle of parental involvement then some research tools will need to be eliminated. For example, if a study is completed only on the school's perspective of parental involvement then the need for the parent surveys is

irrelevant and vice versa. It is imperative that only certain tools are used to address certain issues.

The major limitation of this study was that the study focused on only two schools. Therefore, the recommendations for these schools may not apply to all schools. In order to impact more schools, more schools should be studied. However, much of the information obtained in this study could be possibly used to aid other schools.

School A is a school that lacks a formal program and if School A decides to improve parental involvement, the following is recommended:

- Establish a formal program where a parent heads the program.
- Provide activities that are suitable for all parents. Brainstorm activities prior to implementation.
- Provide transportation for parents to school functions in the form of buses.
- Provide childcare during parent nights or day activities.
- Allow parents to communicate with their fellow parents. Parents are in charge of creating flyers for events and making telephone calls.
- Solicit parental support at the beginning of the school year and during special activities where parents are in attendance.
- Make parental involvement one of the foci of staff development. Explore further ways to get parent involved in addition to thoroughly examining other quality programs.

School B is the school with a formal parental involvement program. Although the program is very successful, it is necessary to make recommendations to improve it even further by doing the following:

- Provide all teachers and all parents with the information discussed in committee meetings.
- Advertise the program to parents by providing them information about the success of a particular activity that took place at school.
- Seek sponsors for the parental involvement program to streamline fundraising.
- Establish a Partners in Education program to allow businesses to assist the school directly by volunteering and offering their financial support.
- Create activities that are focused on including minorities such as Kwanza, Hanukah, Black History Month, or Cinco de Mayo. Research various holidays that are celebrated by minorities and showcase them at school.

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APPENDIX 1: Parent Survey

The following document is designed to collect data on quality parental involvement programs. Your participation in completing the survey is voluntary. Your completion of the survey acknowledges your agreement to participate in the study. Otherwise, discard the survey.

Please complete the following evaluation of your school's parental involvement program. Assign rating for each item with 5 (Strongly Agree), 4 (Agree), 3 (Neither agree/disagree), 2 (Disagree), and 1 (Strongly Disagree).

The school offers activities regularly for parents to participate in during the school year.	1	2	3	4	5
My child's teachers are in regular communication with me.	1	2	3	4	5
The faculty and staff at the school encourage parents to be involved.	1	2	3	4	5
I am involved in activities at the school on a regular basis.	1	2	3	4	5
I see an improvement in my child's work as a result of my involvement.	1	2	3	4	5

Please list the following:

What are some of the activities provided for parents?

If you are a part of a minority race, what kinds of activities are provided for your culture?

List reasons why you may not be as involved in the school program.

Appendix: 2 Teacher Survey

The following document is designed to collect data on quality parental involvement programs. Your participation in completing the survey is voluntary. Your completion of the survey acknowledges your agreement to participate in the study. Otherwise, discard the survey.

Please complete the following evaluation of your school's parental involvement program. Assign rating for each item with 5 (Strongly Agree), 4 (Agree), 3 (Neither agree/disagree), 2 (Disagree), and 1 (Strongly Disagree).

My school has an established parental involvement program. (i.e. with a coordinator and/or committee)	1	2	3	4	5
My school provides sufficient opportunities for parents for parents to be involved.	1	2	3	4	5
The administration and teachers in my school welcome parents into the school.	1	2	3	4	5
My school has identified periods of time for parent-teacher conferences.	1	2	3	4	5
My school mandates parent- teacher communication.	1	2	3	4	5
The administration of my school follows up on parent-teacher communications.	1	2	3	4	5
I am aware of the issues facing some parents that prevent them from being involved.	1	2	3	4	5

Please respond to the following:

List the activities that parents are involved in while visiting the school:

List activities designed specifically to involve minority groups:

In your opinion what are some of the possible reason why parents are not involved.

APPENDIX 3:
Administrator Interview Questions

Administrators will respond to the following by providing details of parental involvement in the school.

1. What roles do parents play in the school? In your opinion, why are they involved in some areas and not others?

2. What are some of the views expressed by your faculty concerning parental involvement? What do you think attributes to these views?

3. What qualities do you think are components of a quality program? Do you feel that your school has a quality parental involvement program?

4. How are parents involved in the governance of the school?

5. What is the school system doing to ensure the implementation of the parental involvement clause of No Child Left Behind?

April D. Hadley
Doctoral Student
Fielding Graduate University

APPENDIX: 4
Program Coordinator Interview Questions

The program coordinator will respond to the following questions:

What is your identified role as coordinator of the parental involvement program?

Do you have a committee? Who comprises this committee? What are the jobs of those members of the committee?

What kinds of activities are offered to parents? Are there specific activities designed to support minority parents in supporting their children's educations?

How often is information disbursed to parents concerning the program or parental involvement?

Does your program disburse evaluation tools to parents to rate the effectiveness of the program? If so, how often and what seems to be the overwhelming response of parents?

What are the future endeavors of this organization to get parents involved?

April D. Hadley
Doctoral Student
Fielding Graduate University

APPENDIX 5:
Focus Group Questions

1. Are you aware that schools have parental involvement programs, complete with coordinators and a committee?
2. What individuals in a school are important to creating a quality parental involvement program?
3. What are some of the characteristics you think schools exhibit when they have formal parental involvement programs?
4. How important do you think it is to have parents contribute to decision making within a school?
5. What activities offered to parents do you think would contribute to improved parental participation?